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LINDLEY

KAYS

BY

BARRY

PAIN





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mm  
Rst.  
—

FIRST EDITION



# LINDLEY KAYS

BY

BARRY PAIN

METHUEN & CO.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON

*First Published in 1904*



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# BOOK I



# LINDLEY KAYS

## CHAPTER I

### THE KAYS' FAMILY

OUTSIDE the music-shop in Market Square, the bills announced, and had for days past announced, Madame Blanche Elmay's Grand Ballad Concert. The names of Miss Marian Ardamore, Mr. Temple Fancot, and Signor Capella also showed large on the bills. The concert was to take place on Tuesday evening in the large room of the Town Hall; reserved seats were five shillings and stalls were ten; unreserved seats started at three shillings and dwindled into the reach of the poor folk. The Misses Camp kept the music-shop and the elder Miss Camp (undeniably the better woman of business, though not nearly so pretty as her younger sister) went over the plan of the concert-room. Already many of the numbers of the stalls and reserved seats had lines of red ink drawn neatly through them. It was satisfactory.

From Market Square the High Street of Haxteth descended for a mile to the railway

station, which was a delightful spot for a boy of twelve, with whom this story will be concerned. It was many, many miles from London, and every day trains went thither, watched by the boy with wide eyes. He knew the times of their departure, and more vaguely he knew the types of passengers. There were the bagmen, who made nothing of it; there were Haxteth tradesmen on an annual or biennial visit to London wholesale houses; there were parties from the Hall, personally attended by a gold-laced station-master, kings and queens of the earth who went first-class. The boy himself had never been to London, and the station was a prison window to him. Through it he got his idea of many colours and possibilities of life. There was risk too in these visits to the station; one might be asked one's business. That had happened to a gang of the boy's comrades at the grammar school. It was a lawless gang that for days had visited the station morning and evening to drink all the water in all the bottles in all the waiting-rooms. A porter had asked their business, and had said darkly that they had better not let him catch them there again. So the boy never entered the station without his penny in his pocket; if challenged, he could say that he wished to buy a paper at the bookstall, and could buy it forthwith; the gold-laced station-master himself could take no exception to that. But he was a quiet boy and was never challenged,





and for that reason he never bought a paper. Papers, for the most part, did not speak his language. The murders and some of the advertisements were interesting; the rest was all waste.

The boy's father, Mr. James Forsyth Kays, facile princeps among Haxteth ironmongers, churchwarden of St. Peter's, and with an official position in the Y.M.C.A. had a large, bright, flourishing shop in the High Street, midway between the railway station and Market Square. He lived over his shop, the private part of the house having a separate entrance. He was a widower, and his unmarried sister, Miss Emmeline Kays, lived with him. She had some small private means and paid for the accommodation; she had her own sitting-room with her own piano in it, and had nothing to do with the housekeeping—that was in the capable hands of Mr. Kays' daughter, Anna Forsyth Kays. Between Miss Emmeline Kays and her brother there was frequent warfare of a mild type. Between Miss Emmeline Kays and her niece Anna—a spirited girl of nearly seventeen—the warfare was at times rather more than mild. Which of them was entitled to the simple appellation, Miss Kays? Aunt Emmeline said that she was entitled to it—if for no other reason for her superior age, thirty-eight. Niece Anna said that she was her father's only daughter, and that she believed his name was Kays; and

if that was so, she herself was certainly Miss Kays, as everybody knew. Mr. Kays was inclined to agree with his daughter. Finally, Aunt Emmeline instructed her correspondents to address their envelopes to Miss Emmeline Kays, but she explained that she had not changed her opinion in the least, and was sulky and bitter.

"It's nothing to do with opinion," said Anna. "I am Miss Kays. That is the fact, and will stop so until I alter it. You are Miss Emmeline Kays." And then her father told her to be more respectful to her aunt, but he did it in a perfunctory manner, from his ever-present sense of duty, as Anna noted.

There also lived in the house Anna's two surviving brothers, Walter and Lindley. Walter was a year older than Anna, and had long left school; it was intended that he should succeed his father in the business. Lindley was the little boy who used to stand gaping on the station platform, watching the people that sped away from Haxteth into real life, with money in their pockets, and wishing hard that he were going too. His brother and sister were so much older than himself, and in so many ways different from him, that Lindley was left a good deal alone.

Mr. Kays had quite decided, though he had not mentioned it to his family, to take four stalls for Madame Blanche Elmay's Grand Ballad



Concert. Theatres and all theatrical performances he abhorred. But he liked music—for choice, soft music. When the voluntary in church imitated bells, or went dreamily with the flute and tremolo stops out, he spoke of it afterwards with approval. He liked, unconsciously, front seats and a just right to criticize the singing of celebrated people from London. He had a dress suit and wished to wear it two or three times in the year. So when the clock in his little office at the back of the big shop struck the half hour after twelve, he rose from his desk. There would be time to walk up to the music-shop and get the tickets before dinner. Mr. Kays dined at one punctually—very punctually.

He paused in the shop on his way out. "Tapton," he said sharply.

"Yes, sir," said the young man, coming out from behind the counter. (He said afterwards to his fellows that he knew at the first word he was in for it.)

"Why wasn't that lawn-mower sent up to the Hall yesterday?"

"It went first thing this morning, sir."

"I asked you why it wasn't sent yesterday. And you'll please give me an answer."

"I did think about it. I was just on the verge of telling Adams, and then I had to go down to the workshop for something, and—well, sir, somehow or other it slipped my memory."

"I promised that mower should be sent yesterday—*promised*, mind you—and I told you to see it was done. Never safe to promise anything with a fool like you about. Slipped your memory, did it? Well, the next time anything slips your memory you'll slip your place. I'm a man of my word, too, you'll find. Hold your tongue now; I don't want to hear any more. Just get on with your work, and see if you can't get some sense into your wooden head."

Tapton crept back to his counter, and Mr. Kays left the shop and turned to the right, towards the Market Place. Some moments passed before the look of righteous anger had died out of his face. It was a round, clean-shaven face, commonplace but for the almost fanatical blue eyes under heavy brows; his hair was grey, thick, and close-cropped. He was dressed—as his unvarying custom was—entirely in black.

To Miss Camp Mr. Kays spoke in the intentionally softened and ingratiating voice which he used to all women—except very near relations, and to his social superiors when they spoke to him in his shop about the weather or local politics. (They had to fill in the time somehow while Tapton was measuring off their picture-wire or climbing a ladder that led towards the lever corkscrews.)

"Good morning, Miss Camp," said Mr. Kays. "I've called to see if you've any good seats left for the concert on Tuesday."

---

"Well, now," said Miss Camp, with conviction, "that is a very queer thing. Five minutes ago I had Mr. Frampton in here, getting tickets for himself and his wife."

"She's better, then?" inquired Mr. Kays.

Mr. Frampton was a solicitor with an indeterminate family. His wife had lost her last baby, and had herself been seriously ill.

"Oh yes, indeed, she's getting about again now. Last Saturday I saw him taking her for a drive—one of the County Hotel carriages. Well, as I was saying, he was choosing his two seats, and I thought to myself, 'I hope he won't take them at the end of that fifth row,' for I knew that was where you would like to be if you were favouring us this time."

"Certainly," said Mr. Kays. "I always have the end of a row if I can get it, and I like the fifth or sixth. I dare say Mr. Frampton would like to be a little more forward—I know his wife would."

"Well," Miss Camp admitted confidentially, "she is rather one like that, isn't she? Anyhow, there are twelve in the front row, reserved for the hall, and Mr. Frampton has his two just behind them. And how many would you like, Mr. Kays?"

"I want four tickets, if I can have them altogether."

"Certainly. E 2, 3, 4, 5."

As she was putting the tickets into the

envelope, her younger sister, Miss Flossie Camp, came out of the room at the back of the shop. She was smiling and blushing—as she generally was—and Mr. Kays permitted himself a little paternal badinage with her. Had she arranged the programme of the concert for them yet?

“No, Mr. Kays, they did it without consulting me this time. I can show it you if you like. *Quando a te lieata*—that’s the Faust thing, you know—sings it beautifully. Oh, you’ll like this one, ‘Bobby!’ That’s simply all the rage in London just now. If I sell one copy of that on the morning after the concert, I shall sell two dozen. Then Signor Capella—he’s been to Windsor Castle, you know, and they’re sending down a special Errastein Grand for him—Chopin. Oh, lovely! But difficult—not that you’d think it to hear him. ‘Cherry Ripe’—that’s an old favourite, some more Italian. But won’t you take it with you?”

Exactly at one o’clock Mr. Kays entered his dining-room, with hands that smelt considerably of scented soap, took his place at the head of the table, bent over the pile of plates, and prayed with closed eyes that for what they were about to receive the Lord might make them truly thankful.

Anna Kays sat opposite to her father; Aunt Emmeline sat on his right, or would do so when she arrived—her unpunctuality was a constant annoyance to Mr. Kays; on his left were the two

boys. And the Lord had not made one of them—to wit, Lindley—truly thankful.

It was the established rule of the house that there should be two courses for dinner. These were generally meat and pudding. Sometimes they were fish and meat, which was to Lindley's mind less satisfactory. And very occasionally came a black and bitter day when Lindley, as he watched Jane laying the table, noticed that she placed a large spoon close alongside each large knife; that meant soup and meat. It never seemed quite fair. Lindley took his portion and eat it, without protest, having the fear of his father before him. But there was a plaintive look in his expressive eyes.

The silver—Mr. Kays had a horror of plated things and of all imitations—was beautifully kept. Anna herself was its efficient guardian, counted the forks and the spoons in their green-baize nest at night, and took them off to her bedroom. She often said that she did not know what on earth she would do if a burglar came there to steal them. It is improbable though that he would have got the best of it. There was a spiræa in the middle of the table, standing in a gilt-edged saucer, the pot covered with a collapsible trellis-work of gilded wood. The furniture was substantial and ugly; it was before the period of tasteful rubbish. Jane, an elderly servant, waited rapidly and noiselessly.

Walter, who had spent the morning at the

workshop, conversed heavily with his father on technical matters. Lindley, with frowning brows, examined the spiræa; it had once yielded him a precious caterpillar. Anna chaffed him, with a smile on her good-natured and rather comely face.

Then, just as they had finished their soup, in came Aunt Emmeline in bonnet and cloak.



## CHAPTER II

### MID-DAY DINNER

AUNT EMMELINE was short and plump. She had some remains of passably good looks—an excellent complexion and even white teeth. Her one point of resemblance to her brother was in her eyes. She also had the eyes of a fanatic. There were generally suggestions of the hospital nurse or of the sister of mercy in her costume—a black cloak and a large gold cross gave the note. For even in their fanaticism the brother and sister differed. Mr. Kays was ardently evangelical, and churchwarden of St. Peter's; Miss Emmeline Kays attended, daily, the services at St. Augustine's, and was an extreme ritualist. She was a leading member of the Guild of Humility at St. Augustine's. This was a band of ladies who were very proud of doing menial work—cleaning and scrubbing—in the church. The work would have been done twice as well in half the time by the same number of charwomen, and the charwomen would have been very glad of it. But then, the Guild

provided those charwomen, who were also communicants, with occasional blankets and not infrequent tea, and perhaps this made up for it. And perhaps it made a skilful blend of pauperization and the premium on hypocrisy, and to the original blunder added another.

Occasionally Aunt Emmeline entertained one or two members of the Guild, or a brace of Augustinian curates, at tea. These functions took place in her own sitting-room, and the rest of the Kays family had no part nor lot in them. It had been a condition of the agreement when she came to live with her brother that she should be able to receive her friends in this way. Lindley, as he passed the door, would hear vague sounds of rippling converse and laughter, or the sentimental strains of one of the *Lieder ohne Worte*, not too difficult. It seemed admirable to him, and he thought his Aunt Emmeline a fortunate and rather brilliant woman. When the last visitor had left, Aunt Emmeline would emerge from her room, and on these occasions she would always be in a specially good temper. She would tell Anna that she had a real gift for housekeeping; Anna was susceptible to compliments on this head and deserved them. She would find Lindley in the dining-room struggling with insurmountable decimals, show him where his mistake was, and practically do the sum for him; at other times she generally refused assistance on the grounds that it would not be fair to

the other boys and that he ought to learn to face his difficulties for himself.

As Aunt Emmeline entered the dining-room, Mr. Kays assumed the expression of ironical good humour.

"Good evening, Emmeline," he said.

He invariably made this remark when his sister was late for the mid-day meal. When she was five minutes behind time for supper at half-past eight he said, "Good morning, Emmeline." The edge of the sarcasm had been somewhat blunted by frequent attrition.

Aunt Emmeline sat down, and put her fat hands in the attitude of marble crusaders. Her eyes closed, and for forty-eight seconds her lips moved quickly and without noise. She was saying her private grace, and she was saying it with a satisfying knowledge that it was in Latin, and that the attitude attracted attention. Lindley stared as if it had been the 3.18 up-train. Jane waited by her side with the soup-plate in her hand, and that air of willing, patient, and yet not unintelligent servitude, which is now almost extinct.

"No soup, thank you," said Aunt Emmeline. Then, and not till then, did she recognize her brother's ironical way of implying that she was unpunctual.

"Well, James," she said—diminutives and nicknames did not exist in the family—"my duties at St. Augustine's detained me until five

minutes to one. If you will tell me how I can walk a mile in five minutes I shall be very glad to hear it. It is not as if any one ever waited for me—or as if I wished that they should.”

“It happens to be my opinion,” said Mr. Kays, seriously, “that when one lives in a house, one should, as far as possible, conform to the rules of that house. And if you are going to talk about duty, it seems to me that a woman’s duty lies with her parish church. Your parish church is St. Peter’s.”

“I don’t think myself,” said Walter, with a heavy attempt at tactful intervention, “that the lawn-mower from the Hall was really worth the repairs. You see, the knives had——”

Nobody took any notice of him. Aunt Emmeline breathed hard, as she always did in moments of irritation.

“You’re talking nonsense, James. If you lived in the parish of St. Augustine, would you attend your parish church?”

“No, I would not—for the very good reason that I am not a Roman Catholic.”

“It would be better, James, if you did not talk of subjects of which you know absolutely nothing.”

“I know quite as much of St. Augustine’s as I want to. I know that one of the clergy there has already openly gone over to Rome, and I can, at any rate, respect that man for his honesty. It

is better than sailing under false colours—like the rest of them.”

Here Walter again brought the Hall lawn-mower into action, and this time with more success. His father was of the opinion that when they had pointed out that it would be cheaper in the end to buy a new one, they had done all they could. The gardener knew perfectly well that the machine was worn out, but undoubtedly he had his instructions—Sir Charles was very closefisted in some things.

Aunt Emmeline said that one of the Hall carriages had passed her in the High Street. There was a lady and a pretty little girl in it—strangers—probably visitors who had just arrived, as the luggage-cart was following.

Lindley heard nothing. He was in a day-dream which had caught fire from Aunt Emmeline’s refusal of soup, and was blazing away finely.

Aunt Emmeline might well refuse soup, seeing that there was a side-board in her sitting-room. Within that side-board were cake and biscuits, fruits too, in their season, and a decanter of rich port wherewith to arrose them. Her dessert was generally a solitary function, with the green Venetian blinds down to exclude the afternoon sun, and followed by a short nap. On rare golden occasions Lindley had been asked to enter and partake. Otherwise, dessert was one of the many marks by which Mr. Kays distinguished

Sunday from other days, and only on one day in seven could Lindley count upon it. Fortunate Aunt Emmeline, with her sacred sitting-room, her sweet stores, her adult right to do wicked things, such as arguing and attending service at St. Augustine's, her knowledge of the piano, her special friends that she could ask to brilliant tea-parties! Suddenly from his misty imaginings leaped he himself more fortunate and aged twenty-five. Admired and wealthy, he saw himself exercising a condescending hospitality towards the two young Framptons—sons of a solicitor to whose forward tendencies Mr. Kays had alluded, comrades of Lindley at the Grammar School, in school hours, and strictly forbidden (as they explained to Lindley) to associate with him or any other tradesman's son out of school hours. He saw himself seated in a first-class compartment of the up-express, lighting his cigarette, while a gold-laced station-master handed in his dressing-case. He saw himself riding a magnificent camel, with a sunset in front of him and thirty very respectful retainers behind him, exploring the extremely foreign country. He read the account of himself—with a portrait, remarkably handsome—in the *Sunday Afternoon*. The kaleidoscope whirled, and one picture flashed out after another, and all in the space of a few seconds.

"Wake up, Lindley," said his sister. "Father's speaking to you."

"You must get out of that habit of mooning," said Mr. Kays. "I was asking you a question. Is there a train from London, getting in about one?"

Lindley was the recognized authority on trains.

"The down-express gets in at one seven. It's about the best down-train. And I've never seen it," he added regretfully. Dinner had always interfered.

Mr. Kays resumed his conversation with his sister.

"Then you may depend upon it, Emmeline, that's who you saw in the carriage—Mrs. Boden Fielding and her little girl—they call her some foreign name. So that quarrel's made up again, then."

"Family quarrels," said Walter, heavily, "seem to me a pity."

"She wasn't wearing a scrap of black," said Aunt Emmeline, "though it's not two years ago her husband died. There she was, laughing and chatting away. I thought myself that it must be her, but I'd been always told that Sir Charles had refused to see her again. And in a widow, too, one expects—well, a something."

Mrs. Boden Fielding was the sister of Sir Charles Amadel of the Hall, Haxteth. The quarrel had been a one-sided one. Sir Charles abhorred his sister's opinions, and she had shrugged her pretty shoulders and refused to

discuss them with him. Aunt Emmeline said now that she thought Sir Charles had been in the wrong.

"I shouldn't say that," said Mr. Kays. "The Word is very clear: 'Come ye out from among them and be ye separate.'" He shook his head gravely, and cut himself another slice of beef.

"It was not the way to win her back to the Church," said Aunt Emmeline.

Lindley had listened wondering. He ventured a question.

"What was the matter with Mrs. Boden Fielding?"

"Mrs. Boden Fielding is an Atheist," said his father, sternly.

There was a moment's dead silence. Lindley felt cold with horror.

Mr. Kays changed the subject and his manner with a sweep of an envelope from his pocket. It contained the concert tickets. He was now playful, a rather rare mood and much welcomed by the family.

"They say a fool and his money are soon parted," said Mr. Kays, "and I've been parting with some of mine this morning. Here are four tickets. I'm taking you, Emmeline, with Anna and Walter, to the concert. We must leave Lindley to look after the house—it wants some responsible person. (I dare say I shall find some other little treat for you—something that won't involve such late hours.) The tickets are just at



the end of the fifth row. Now, isn't that an act of senseless extravagance?" His round face beamed with smiles.

There was a chorus of thanks. "I like good music," said Walter; and he quite believed it, and it was not at all true. "I like good music about as well as I like anything."

"I rather wish it had been Oratorio," said Mr. Kays. "'The Messiah,' now, would have—but, however——"

"Wait a minute," said Aunt Emmeline. She looked perturbed. "What night is the concert?"

"Tuesday."

"How unfortunate! On Tuesday I am dining at the Rectory."

The wife of the Rector of St. Augustine's invited Miss Emmeline Kays to dinner twice every year, with regularity, and invariably had one man—a curate, as a rule—to meet her. These two dinners were the principal social occasions of her year; an evening concert, with her ticket presented to her, ran them very close, and she was sorry to miss it. Yet the feeling that she had stumbled into a rapid social vortex, and was beset with so many brilliant engagements that she could not fulfil them all, was not altogether displeasing to her.

"Yes, that's a pity," said Mr. Kays. "Well, what's to be done with the other ticket? You wouldn't care to go, I suppose, Lindley?"

"Of course I should like to go, father." He

was not really sure that he wanted to go at all, but he was quite sure that he was expected to be very eager.

"Then, I think this time," said Mr. Kays, "we must let you go. Everybody finished?" He bowed his head in the grace after meat.

Anna brought the cigar-box from the side-board and offered it to her father.

"No time for it to-day, my dear. Saturday, you know. We're very busy downstairs just now."

Walter said he could smoke one in the workshop without interfering with what he was doing, and helped himself. Father and son went off together. Anna went up to her room to devise and carry out the modernization of her one evening dress, which she was to wear at the concert.

"Come up to my room for a few minutes, Lindley, won't you?" said Aunt Emmeline.

Lindley accepted with alacrity. It was not a big room, and it was very full of furniture and ornaments. There was a rosewood side-board with a mirror on the top, a rosewood piano, a couple of most comfortable chairs with reading-desks, a writing-table with all conceivable writing apparatus (sealing-wax alone showing four distinct varieties), and a big sofa.

Lindley sat on the extreme edge of the sofa and sipped his glass of port and water—in the proportions of one to three—and munched a

generous slice of plum cake. This, he felt, was real living. His eyes strayed over the engravings on the wall—the three choir-boys singing the “Te Deum” with a very “Nunc Dimittis” expression on their faces, the View in Surrey, the Dogs playing with a Paper-knife.

“What are you doing with your half-holiday?”

“I’d promised to show a boy something down at the station.”

“Then you’ll be passing Stafford Street?”

“Yes, I can take a letter for you. I would have done that anyhow if you’d wanted it.”

“Thank you, Lindley. You’re a good boy.” Aunt Emmeline went to the writing-table and wrote a brief note to the Rev. Theodore Gold, the senior curate at St. Augustine’s. She said that she had thought over his request for a private interview; they were both dining at the Rectory on Tuesday night, and he might find his opportunity afterwards; and she was his very sincerely.

Lindley had taken notes for her to the curate’s room in Stafford Street before, and had never told a soul. She had not enjoined him to secrecy, but he had vaguely understood it would be dishonourable to speak.

When he had gone, she reclined on the sofa and pondered upon a grave matter.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SUNDAY AT HOME

THERE came a sharp repeated rap on Lindley's bedroom door, and Mr. Kays' voice said—in the same tone in which it addressed an oblivious Tapton.

"Are you getting up, Lindley?"

The voice would almost have awakened Lindley from death itself—so much it frightened him. He stirred desperately from his golden slumber on the iron bedstead. A hand shot out into nothing; the other rubbed the eye that was more reluctant to open.

"Yes, father," he said, with unnatural vivacity, plunging from the paradise of his dreams into the cold depths of his usual Sunday.

"Ten minutes past seven. We leave in a quarter of an hour. Walter's already dressed. Be quick."

Lindley was to go to the early prayer-meeting at the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association. From thence to family prayers (extra length for Sundays) before breakfast.

Morning Service. On the second Sunday in the month, the children's afternoon service, where the curate always began his sermon, "I wonse knew a liddle geeurl," and never had anything interesting or even probable to tell you about her. Family prayers after supper. Private devotions, if any. Lindley omitted them with a clean conscience on the Sundays when he'd been to one prayer-meeting, three services, and two sets of family prayers.

There were compensations. Sunday dinner presented a cold sirloin and a cold fruit tart, followed by a rather profuse dessert and one glass of claret. All this was very much to Lindley's taste. And yet Sunday was the worst day of the week for Lindley. He was not an irreligious boy; he wanted—at least he was quite willing—to pray; but there was so much of it. He became very tired. Everything to which he had any inclination—except good food—became suddenly wicked and prohibited. He sang of "those endless Sabbaths the blessed ones see" with a doubt that he tried hard to stifle.

He was ready in time, and found his father and Walter waiting in the hall.

"You cannot have said your prayers properly," said Mr. Kays, severely. "If you would only wake a little earlier, you would be able to begin Sunday as Sunday should be begun. Your duty to God should not be slurred and hurried. Come

along now. And the top button of your waist-coat's undone."

Mr. Kays closed the front door with the brass name-plate on it. They were out in the empty street, empty but for the clattering milkman, that privileged Sabbath-breaker, and a slow needless policeman.

They talked but little. Any reference to games or sports was prohibited; any allusion to work or business was prohibited. A remark on the weather would pass, if it were not of a jesting character. Walter said that so far as he could see, the country wanted rain. Mr. Kays gave the subject the proper flavour of the day by saying that if the drought continued they would probably have the prayer for rain next Sunday. Lindley was rather glad to hear it; it would make a change, and he welcomed all changes in the service. The Athanasian Creed was quite unintelligible to him, but he liked its rarity. Banns of marriage had a human interest; and there was always a dramatic chance that they might be forbidden. There was a pleasant pathos too, when the prayers of the Church were desired for any one who was dangerously ill—as they had been for Mrs. Frampton when her baby died, and she herself had so nearly passed away. Lindley had thought twice about it, and had finally given that proud lady the benefit of his prayers.

Mr. Kays and his two sons walked in silence.

Tink, tink, tink, went the mean little bell of St. Augustine's, calling to the first of its early celebrations, of which Mr. Kays disapproved. It was already two minutes to the half-hour when they arrived, down a side passage out of a back street, at the rooms of the Y.M.C.A. On the right of the entrance were the custodian's apartments ; on the left was the big room where the prayer-meeting was to be held.

There were very few present—the custodian, a very fat man with a falsetto voice, two or three local tradesmen, Mr. Frampton's head clerk, and Tapton. It is to be feared that Tapton's motives for attendance would not have stood a searching examination. There was some solemn shaking of hands, and then Mr. Kays glanced at his watch.

"I think we will begin now," he said.

He mounted the platform at one end of the room, and the rest ranged themselves on the cane-seated chairs. Mr. Kays bent his head and spoke the few words of introductory prayer. There was a murmur of 'Amen'; the curator, always fervent, said it three times, as though it had been a word of applause. Then Mr. Kays sat down, opened the Bible on the table before him, and read the parable of the Sower. He next offered a short address on the parable. When it was his turn to take the prayer-meeting he generally selected a parable, and in the address upon it the words, "And so it is with us" were a certainty—a frequent certainty. It

was after the address that in Lindley's opinion the interest began. For then the chairman selected in succession two of the audience to make an extemporary prayer. The chairman selected any two that he liked, and it was never known beforehand what the selection would be. Jealousy came into it a little; those who were conscious of a gift of improvization, proved at previous meetings, did not like it if for Sunday after Sunday they were neglected. Mr. Havish, who was Mr. Frampton's head clerk, would get rather hasty if his omission were too frequent. He was all right this time.

"I will ask Mr. Havish to lead us in prayer," said Mr. Kays.

Mr. Havish assumed an expression of deprecatory surprise. Lindley saw it, and knew that Mr. Havish was making a grotesquely ineffective attempt to appear modest; boys read faces before they can read Greek—a long time before.

Mr. Havish knelt bolt upright in front of his chair and started off at a great pace and without the least trace of hesitation to apologize to the Almighty for his poor stumbling, faltering speech. His language was flowery and rich in metaphor. He finished four smooth and crowded minutes, with a quotation from "Lead, kindly light." It was, perhaps, the fault of Mr. Havish if Lindley regarded this part of the meeting as a sort of religious round game, and Mr. Havish himself as an excellent performer.





The custodian was next called upon, and his style was very different. He dug his elbows well into the cane seat of his chair and rocked it with emotion; his fat body rocked; his high querulous voice rocked. His prayer came in forceful spurts, full of exclamations, devoid of aspirates.

There followed a hymn and the blessing; and then Mr. Havish flicked the dust from his knees with a clean and scented handkerchief, and modestly repudiated the suggestion of Mr. Washer, the greengrocer, that his remarkable eloquence was the result of previous preparation. Mr. Kays touched Tapton on the shoulder, and said he was glad to see him there. The custodian extended a large damp hand to Mr. Washer, and offered a less intimate and more respectful farewell to Mr. Kays.

As a rule Aunt Emmeline was not at her best on Sundays. It was her busy day; it made her severe. She took her meals with her hat on and, as it were, with her loins girded. She had the air of a concentrated organizer. One felt that but for her the Augustinian Sunday would all break up. But to-day—Lindley noticed it—she was much softer and gentler. She no longer appeared to be taking the helm during a storm. She smiled without apparent reason, while her eyes showed nervousness. She swayed between a fear and a happiness. She looked younger and prettier. Lindley had seen the same thing

on the previous day, when he took the letter. He had vaguely the idea that something was to happen.

After breakfast Mr. Kays and Anna and Walter walked up to the cemetery. Lindley remained in the drawing-room. It was a big room that smelled of furniture-polish and lavender. Everything in it was florid. The carpet was profuse with buds and tendrils. The rosewood furniture missed no chance to curve; the sofa was sinuous and the wall-paper tropical. Lindley sat down on the floor before the low bookcase with the marble top; he opened one of the glass doors and surveyed the scanty and miserable contents. He passed over a row of bound volumes of a religious magazine, and such books as "Sermons in Advent," "Wanderings in Palestine," "The Papist refuted," and the verses of Frances Ridley Havergal. The choice resolved itself into "Sunday Echoes in Week-day Hours"—an ingenious work in which the story of some schoolboys invariably illustrated the collect of the week—or Bunyan's "Holy War," which abounded with imaginative pictures of a fascinating horror.

He chose the "Holy War," but his eyes wandered soon away from it, and stared out into the white sunny street. Respectable fathers, with silk hats and creaking boots, took out their young for a stroll before church. A school in procession passed with a fusillade of heel-taps.

Lindley looked out into the furthest distance, where the grey haze foretold that the day would be hot.

And oh! to be there—or anywhere—so long as it were far away! To get into a train, and see the last house in Haxteth left behind, and the sudden procession of telegraph-poles with the green country behind them, and a mysterious black hut staring out of a deep chalk cutting! To smell the salt in the air, and suddenly to sight the sea all flashing in the sun, and the brown sail of a happy boat filled with the free wind!

The door opened, and Aunt Emmeline entered. Lindley was borne back to the Sunday at home, with the smell of furniture-polish, and the million restrictions, and the things he could not understand.

“Why, Lindley, you’re looking very gloomy!”

“I’m not really,” said Lindley, eagerly. “I was just going to read.”

For he knew that to be gloomy was to be sulky, to be sulky was to sin, and to sin was to be punished, by his father here, and by the devil (*vide* the illustrations in the “Holy War”) hereafter.

“And in the mean time, you’d fallen into a brown study. By the way, Lindley—you’re rather forgetful sometimes, you know—you did deliver that letter all right for me on Saturday?”

"I? Yes. Mr. Gold was out, but the servant said she would give it him."

"Thank you. That's all right. And what were you dreaming about?"

"I don't know exactly. Lot of things. Is Mr. Tofts a gentleman?"

"Well, hardly—not by the usual definition."

"But Sir Charles Amadel is."

"Of course."

"Well, they both sell coal."

"Not in the same way. Tofts is a retail coal dealer. Sir Charles Amadel owns collieries."

"I'm the son of a tradesman, and so the young Framptons are not allowed to go about with me. I suppose there is no doubt that Mr. Frampton is a gentleman?"

Suddenly, and in a quiet way, Aunt Emmeline became angry.

"I have heard it said that all solicitors are gentlemen by Act of Parliament. In Frampton's case, it would take an Act of Parliament, I think. His father was an errand boy at King's Barnly!"

"Was he?" This was satisfactory. "And my father's father—my grandfather. What did he do?"

Aunt Emmeline hesitated. "He was a gentleman, but—it is not a very creditable history—I dare say your father will tell you of it one of these days, when you are older—I can't think,

though, Lindley, why you should bother about these things."

Lindley wrinkled his forehead. "It wasn't bothering exactly. The young Framptons talked about it. I thought I should like to know what the rules were."

It provided a subject for his day-dreams during the Litany in church that morning. It was astonishing the amount of things that came swarming into his mind during the Litany. If Mr. Frampton, starting from that disadvantageous position, had become a great man in Haxteth, one who could forbid his sons to associate with Lindley Kays, what might not Lindley Kays become, if he got his chance? But then he had gathered from books, of an improving character, that the successes of this world were always those who had started from the most disadvantageous positions. It was the boy who was in rags and hungry, the boy who denied himself his dinner in order to buy candles that he might work late at night—that was the boy who became envied and brilliant. His own position seemed too disadvantageous for its permanence to content him, and yet—so far as he had read—it was not sufficiently disadvantageous for the beginning of a great career. He thought these things, though not in those words. His ideal, maybe, was low and selfish enough; but then, the young take the ideals thrust on them by teaching and the example of

their environment; it is later that they think things out.

In the drawing-room after dinner that afternoon, Lindley Kays attempted to get further information from his father on the subject of social distinctions, and the Kays family history. Mr. Kays had dined well, had smoked an excellent cigar—he was fond of quoting Spurgeon on this subject—and had indulged in a short and refreshing nap. But his sense of duty was not dimmed, the eloquent and minatory sermon at St. Peter's that morning had moved him, and he had just read the editorial observations on "Worldliness" in the current number of *Lance and Banner*—a polemical penny low-church organ. So Mr. Kays treated his son with sorrowful severity.

The Framptons were right to obey their father; Mr. Kays hoped that Lindley would never try to lead them or any other boy into disobedience. These worldly distinctions were worthless. What would they go for at the Judgment Day? Did Lindley ever think about that?

(Did he? Many a night he had dreamed that he was in hell, and wakened in a sweat of horror.)

It was enough for us to do our duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call us. And do it without grumbling or repining—without wanting to be something greater in the world's sight than we were.

Yet scraps of information of interest to Lindley leaked out, instances taken to enforce Mr. Kays' teaching. It appeared that Mr. Kays was only sixteen when his father died, and left but a handful out of his former fortune. There had been three younger brothers and a younger sister.

"And who was it who helped us then? Not the relatives of your gentleman grandfather. It was a kinsman of my mother's, a tradesman, as I am, who gave me a lift, and made me what I am."

Yes, Mr. Kays had drunk in the ideals, the religion, the way of life, and even the business instinct of that kinsman who had become as a father to him. Of his own father he spoke with a strange mixture of pride and disapprobation. Lindley caught glimpses of what the life had been like in that generation, in his grandfather's time. A handsome man, this grandfather—popular, generous, wilful.

"And I fear," said Mr. Kays, "a self-indulgent gambler and spendthrift. May God keep you from his faults! May He show you the worthlessness of these earthly prizes, and guide your mind to higher things, Lindley! Dear me, it's tea-time."

That night Lindley dreamed that he was in the possession of measureless wealth and that everybody praised him—a golden dream to the boy bruised in this iron religious mill.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONCERT

THE large room at the Town Hall was well filled. The party from the Hall had come in half an hour late, and did not seem to know that there was any one else in the room. It was their distinguishing mark. The rest of the occupants of the reserved seats all appeared conscious of the possibility of criticism. Sir Charles Amadel, a little bent man with a bald head and the eyes of a hawk under ferocious brows, looked twenty years older than his sister, Mrs. Boden Fielding. She was a woman of forty, with a calm, pale face and a sweet and friendly expression; she had never been quite a beauty, and she would never be quite plain. She wore a simple little black dress that had cost her thirty guineas, and was quite right. She had not been in the Hall ten minutes before bright-eyed Anna Kays had made some very useful mental notes of the simple little black dress. The rest of the Hall party were mostly young men and maidens of a healthy and handsome type, and fonder of sport than music. There



were also an elderly gentleman, who looked like finance incarnate, and his long-nosed wife; Lady Amadel, who rather gave one the idea at first sight that she was insipid but nutritious, and Mrs. Boden Fielding's little girl of eleven. The financier had passed judgment on that little girl when the women had left the table that evening. "That will be a breaker of hearts, Sir Charles." Sir Charles had owned that she looked a pretty little gipsy, excited, no doubt, with the unusual pleasure. Lindley noticed that she roamed from place to place, and they all seemed to pet her. It was more interesting to look at her than to hear Mr. Temple Fancot sing Italian.

Mr. Temple Fancot retired amid good-hearted but slightly insincere applause, and Signor Capella led on Madame Blanche Elmay. Signor Capella looked like a grey-haired English butcher. Madame Blanche Elmay was fat, and had the remains of rather coarse good looks. She wore a gorgeous dress of black and yellow, of which London had now grown tired. She smiled as if she were really very pleased. She held a book of the words in her hand unopened. Signor Capella sat down to the piano; he had no music, and he did not look at the piano; he watched Madame Blanche Elmay. They were going to play an old trick, which they did well.

"This is 'Bobby,'" whispered Mr. Kays to his daughter. "Had a great success in London, I believe."



"I'm glad it's English," said Anna, sturdily.

The symphony rose to passion and fire and died slowly away in a whispered sorrow. There was a moment's pause. Then Madame Elmay's voice, a plummy contralto, began the song very gently, with a confidential plaintiveness.

Lindley watched Mrs. Frampton intently. She had a thin proud face, with her lips pressed tightly together. But there was a look half of fear in her eyes. For this was cruel—it was the song of a woman whose baby had died as Mrs. Frampton's baby had died. And the poor woman was not educated enough to know that the words were wretched and the music commonplace; as it was sung, it struck her in the heart. Her husband, red-faced and corpulent, glanced at her nervously.

Madame Elmay sang mercilessly, making almost a gem of the Brummagem ballad—

"Oh, my Bobby, my baby Bobby,  
Why have you gone away?  
I want your dear little hand in mine,  
And the sound of your laugh at play.  
Oh, Bobby, I loved you so,  
I loved you so,  
I loved you so,  
Why have you broken my heart, my baby?  
Why have you gone away?"

"I think of your kiss as you said good night,  
And your eyes looked up to mine,  
And it cannot be true that——"

Mrs. Frampton's rigid body bent, and one

hand covered her eyes ; the other fumbled for a ridiculous little lace handkerchief. Lindley could see her mouth twisted down and her shoulders moving quickly. Madame Elmay was singing—

“ Oh, Bobby, I miss you so,  
I miss you so,  
I miss you so,  
Your kiss as you said good night, my baby,  
And your eyes looked up to mine ! ”

Mr. Frampton whispered to his wife. She shook her head. No, she would not go out. But she clasped his podgy hand and held it tightly. So Lindley, who had come to hear music, saw tragedy for the first time in his life—tragedy with its disregard of all that is accidental, concentrated in the one fact this woman had loved and lost her child. There was a smudge from her black glove on her wet white cheek.

The song ended in tumultuous applause. Madame Blanche Elmay, recalled, sang an innocuous and almost sprightly chansonette with reference to the flowers of spring. “ More Italian,” grumbled Anna Kays. With the love, not uncommon, of a high-spirited and bright-tempered girl for the sad and sentimental, she wanted to hear “ Bobby ” again. With the approval of her father she bought a copy of “ Bobby ” next morning. Flossie Camp sold it and many other copies. She sold them in an absent-minded way, making a mistake at least

once in counting the change. She had an appointment for that afternoon, and it was much on her mind—an appointment as to which she had told lies to her elder sister. Anna Kays struggled laboriously through the song, and was dissatisfied. She said that it was not fair. The opening symphony was not what Signor Capella had played; the printed accompaniment was quite different. He had at one point let his fingers slide from the keys and allowed, effectively, Madame Elmay to sing a phrase alone. There was no indication on the music sheet at what point the accompaniment would do anything of the kind at all. No, it was not fair to musicians of Anna's character.

As the concert went on Mrs. Frampton regained her composure. She had been right not to give up the seat for which ten shillings had been paid. She hoped that no one had seen her; she had covered her eyes with her hand, and had had a queer instinctive feeling that this helped towards invisibility.

But Lindley had seen—seen the sorrow of the woman, and the great beauty of the little gipsy girl—such sorrow and such beauty as he had never seen before. His heart was full; he would have cried but for the publicity of the thing and a healthy school training. At the piano Signor Capella was playing a wistful nocturne of Chopin's, and Lindley's thoughts went to the music. What thoughts? He could never quite

recapture them, though through all that happened afterwards, this night remained memorable to him. There was a feeling of exaltation; just now he loved everybody, especially the lady with the smudgy face, who would not let her little boys play with him. He would have liked to tell her he was sorry for her. He wanted to see the beautiful little girl that everybody petted—to see her every day. He tried to picture her life. He wondered which of the people up at the Hall she liked best.

And as he caught his uncomprehending glimpse of the bond of humanity that binds us all, good and bad, high and low, one with another, as he felt—with no power to express it—something of the sadness of beauty and of the beauty of sorrow, the nocturne ended. Signor was bowing impassively, and the party from the Hall had risen to go. There were still three items on the programme, and it was recklessly wasteful of these people. But finance incarnate and Sir Charles Amadel looked relieved; and already one of the handsome young men had stifled a yawn as he complained to Mrs. Boden Fielding that it was a pity that this kind of thing, though bad, was not quite bad enough to be funny.

They had come to their seats by the passage down the middle of the room, and Lindley supposed they would go out the same way. His heart beat fast when they took the side passage, for he sat at the end of the row, and the beautiful

girl would pass quite close to him. He looked down and up—down and up again. He did not want to stare rudely, but he had to see her. She was all in white, with her dark hair tumbling over her shoulders; she walked lightly and gracefully with her head up—a gipsy, but of the blood royal. A yard or two away her eyes met Lindley's; she looked at him with serious interest, without a smile. As she passed him she paused for less than a second and her red lips parted; and then she went quickly on again.

Lindley knew—far more certainly than he knew most things—that she had been on the verge of speaking to him. He knew too, that, but for the gulf between, he and she would have liked each other. He trembled all over. He raised a programme on which the letters danced, saw how his hand shook, and put it down again. Nobody must know, and he felt that any one who saw him at that moment would know. Anna was observant, and her questions were blunt, and her chaff of her young brother was sometimes a little merciless. Presently he ventured to raise his eyes. No, nobody had noticed. Some one was singing something that did not matter.

He was glad when the concert ended, and he got into the cool night air. Might he walk back? Yes, if he liked. Anna said it was rather funny of him when the cab was there, and there was plenty of room. So off he went alone and

glorious, his mind ablaze with thoughts too rapid for his consciousness to capture them, filled with a high happiness that he could not analyze.

The table under the lighted gas in Mr. Kays' dining-room was covered with a black and red table-cloth—a small neat pattern of ivy leaves. At one end was a tray with sandwiches and cake and brightly polished decanters and glasses. They were all gathered round the tray, Aunt Emmeline with them. She had returned from her dinner at the Rectory. Lindley saw that she was unusually bright and animated, and he had been right—something had happened. For once in his life he did not want to eat cake; but he was careful to take some. He did not want to talk; but he was careful to say things which would meet with approval. Abstinence and silence would have been unfavourably interpreted; convicted of being sick or sulky, he would have no chance of a permission to spend the morrow as he wished. For the morrow was to be a whole holiday, a tribute to a recent academical success of an old pupil. That was what the head-master said; and the head-master wanted to run up to London to see the inside of a theatre again. After this heavenly evening to wake to a day of freedom! Lindley had noticed that the good things all come together.

He got through successfully. What a good temper everybody seemed to be in to-night! He

saw that he was in favour, and that it was a good moment in which to ask. Certainly, he might go off to the Dyke after his beloved butterflies, and spend the day there. He would not come back to dinner, but he would take something with him. And he would take a towel, and get a swim in Beeton Brook. Lindley was a good and fearless swimmer, though athletics in general did not much interest him. Possibly, the conscience of Mr. Kays smote him for having been too thoughtlessly indulgent.

"And be careful you get into no mischief," he added gravely.

Lindley shook hands with his father, nodded to his brother, kissed Anna and Aunt Emmeline, and went off to bed. He was soon asleep—happy in a strange way he had never known before, wondering if the beautiful girl had thought about him again, at peace with all the world, and emotionally worn out.

Mr. Kays and his sister were left alone in the dining-room now, Mr. Kays sipped weak whisky and water, and smoked a very small cigar. He said that it would help him to get to sleep, otherwise, he protested, if he went past his regular hour for retiring he might lie for hours and get no sleep at all. Spurgeon, he added, had found benefit from cigars.

"James," said Aunt Emmeline, as shy-bold as a girl. "I have some news for you."

He looked at her, and read it in her face.



"Do you mean," he said quietly, "that you are engaged to be married?"

"Yes. How did you know? Mr. Gold brought me back from the Rectory to-night, and he has asked me to marry him. You do not know him yet, and do not know how good he is. In Church matters, of course, we hold views that you disapprove; but——"

Mr. Kays interrupted her, almost brusquely. "Are you happy, Emmeline?" he asked.

She sighed and looked away. "I think I have never been happy before."

"Yes, yes. I saw it. I must not and do not despair that God will guide you both from error in the end, for I know that you mean well." There was a slight pause, and business-like Mr. Kays added: "And his income?"

"Very little, I believe. But with my money it will be enough. There are some prospects too. He spoke of that; but I did not quite understand. He is coming to see you to-morrow."

"Yes," said Mr. Kays, meditatively, "and if I told you to give him up—after I had seen him?"

"I should not do it," said Aunt Emmeline, quietly.

"And I could not compel you. You are your own mistress. Well, well. That's right in a way. I shall be glad to see him to-morrow, and I wish you every happiness. Good night, my dear."

## CHAPTER V

### THE HOLIDAY

THE sun streamed in at Lindley's open windows when he awoke. It was fine weather for his holiday. He breakfasted with impatience, eager to start away on his seven-mile walk to the Dyke.

Mr. Kays had had another talk with his sister before breakfast, and it had been decided to say nothing about the engagement until after Mr. Kays had had his interview with Mr. Gold. But Lindley found Aunt Emmeline very kind and gracious. She and Anna helped him to pack his satchel, and Aunt Emmeline showed her customary nervousness about the cyanide bottle. Must he have it?

Lindley said it was the best thing to use for the purpose. And suppose some of it shook out and got mixed with the sandwiches? It couldn't. It was fixed with plaster of Paris on the top, and there was the cork as well. And he would wrap it in the towel so that it could not be broken. He did not altogether dislike giving the impression that he handled dangerous

things ; and while he reassured Aunt Emmeline as to the innocuousness of that bottle under his own proper management, he gave her some horrible facts illustrative of the deadliness of cyanide. She admired the ingenuity of the folding-net with the telescopic handle, and the neatness of the cork-lined collecting boxes. She was ready this morning to be interested in everything, and to like everybody.

So Lindley went forth with a light heart, and the satchel on his back, and a shilling—sixpence more than he had expected—in the pocket of his white flannel trousers.

He left Haxteth behind him and took the white country road. A glance at his silver watch—a present from his father on his last birthday—showed him that in the ordinary course he would, at this time of the morning, have been in trouble for forgetting what prepositions in Latin govern the ablative case. But this was a sunny holiday, with the stuffy schoolroom left behind him. Five miles out of Haxteth he stopped at a sleepy public-house, ordered a bottle of gingerbeer from a red-armed woman who seemed inclined to talk to him, drank it off like a man, and counted the change from his shilling. Here he unpacked his net and put it together.

“That’s as clever a thing as ever I see,” said the red-armed woman.

Lindley was not displeased ; he had thoughts

of showing her the cyanide bottle, but decided against it. As it seemed necessary to say something, he said that he was going on to the Dyke.

"And a nice day for it," said the woman, approvingly. "Good morning, master. And thank you. And luck to you."

"Thank you; good morning," said Lindley, gravely.

She stood in her doorway and watched him as he went on up the road.

The Dyke, reputed to be of Roman origin, was common land stretching for two or three miles along the edge of the Amadel estate. It was a noted hunting-ground for entomologists, and every now and again brakes, filled with pleasure-seekers from Haxteth, would drive out there. At one spot an abandoned railway-cutting crossed the Dyke, with deep walls of white chalk. Here and there the metals were still left, yellow with rust, with clumps of wild snap-dragon growing between them. At the end of its straight distance came a broken bridge. And it all had the romance of lost endeavour. On the further side of the Dyke was Beeton Brook, a deep still-water that the dragon-flies haunted in the hot months. The Dyke itself was covered with dark mysterious plantations, bright gorse and bracken.

Lindley climbed to the top of the Dyke and looked round. He could see no one and

hear no voices, and this pleased him. The longing for the desert island comes far more frequently than one dares to acknowledge, fearing charges of morbidity or affectation. He put his net and satchel under a tree, and wandered off, without one thought of the catching, killing, and setting of butterflies.

Anywhere through those trees, anywhere in the open space, in the pathetic desolation of that railway that came to ruin, or by the deep waters of Beeton Brook, she might come to him, the girl that had so nearly spoken to him the night before. And he tried to find out why he wanted so much to see her again, and he could not think why it should be so.

He brought himself back to the hard business of life, took his net and filled a collecting case, perfunctorily and with no pleasure in it. Yet he had got one or two good things, specimens that schoolfellows would envy after school next morning, and endeavour to win from him by insufficient offers of exchange. His watch and his inclinations spoke of the dinner hour. He eat his sandwiches and drank spring water; he thought about smoking, but he had no cigarettes and—which was equally important—there was no admirer to see him do it; suddenly he roused himself, for, lying on his back and staring at the scarce drifting clouds, he was on the verge of falling asleep. He took his towel, flicked a leaf from a bush with it, and went off briskly in the

direction of Beeton Brook. He whistled, in tune, a melody of the Chopin nocturne that he had heard the night before.

On the steep bank that led down to the brook he sat down. Perhaps it was almost too soon after dinner for a bathe, and it was pleasant to watch the sliding water with the group of lilies floating on it under the trees on the further side. He stared hard at it, picturing in the water mirror, and a little pebble fell with a pat on his straw hat. He jumped to his feet.

There she was at last. There she was, standing at the top of the bank; she was again all in white, and she wore no hat and no stockings. There were sandals on her pretty feet. Her hair was abominably untidy and quite lovely. She did not smile, as a child might, at its fun, though she had most undoubtedly thrown that pebble at Lindley. She looked penitent. She spoke in a clear voice with a friendly caress in it.

"I'm so sorry. I just simply had to throw that stone. It was quite little. It didn't hurt you?"

"No, not at all," said Lindley, vexed to find that his voice had suddenly gone husky, and that it was difficult for him to speak at all. "It was a very good shot." He wanted to say something that would please her.

She came slowly down the bank towards him; he nearly ran away.

"I saw you at the concert last night—and I wanted to talk. Anyhow, I had to throw that stone, and I'm glad you don't mind." She held out her hand to him; they shook hands very solemnly. "Will you tell me what your name is?"

"Lindley Kays."

"I'm Sonya Fielding, and I'm out all alone. Are you?"

"Yes, I'm alone too. I came here because it was a holiday, and I wanted to get butterflies and bathe."

"Are you glad or sorry I found you?"

"I'm very glad."

Her face became inscrutable and she looked away from him.

"I knew you would be here."

"How?"

"Don't know. And, oh!" she exclaimed. "Do look at those lilies! They're real water-lilies. I wish they were this side."

And here was a chance for Lindley. He became just a little authoritative and important.

"I can get you those lilies," he said, "if you'll do exactly what I tell you."

"Yes. Go on."

"Come with me, then."

He took her up to the top of the bank and down on the other side, where she was quite out of sight of the river.

"You must sit here," he said. "I'll give you my coat to sit on. Have you got a watch?"

Sonya shook her head. She took a deep interest in all this, and seated herself obediently on the coat.

"Then I'll lend you my watch. Now, see! You must promise me not to move from here until the big hand's on the nine—that will be just ten minutes—and then you will have the lilies."

"I promise it solemnly."

He ran off at once. When he was at the top of the bank, she called after—

"Lindley Kays!"

"Yes."

"Rather long stalks, please, if you can."

He nodded, and disappeared from her view down the bank. She could hear the splashing in the water. Before the big hand of the watch was on the nine he was back again, with his spoils in his hands, and his hair still wet.

"How splendid! How glorious!" she cried. "Four—five—why, there's six of them. Oh! I do thank you."

"There was another one, too; but it was too old and packed full of flies."

"When you swam across, how did you take your knife to cut them?"

"In my mouth."

Sonya Fielding sighed. "I wish I could swim," she said. She brushed the flies from her lilies with great care.

"What are you going to do with them?"



"Make a garland for my hair. Don't you think they'll look nice? And while I'm doing it you must tell me all about yourself."

"There isn't anything much," said Lindley. He began, shortly, with his birth and parentage, in which Sonya showed no interest whatever. But she had many questions to ask about his life at the Grammar School, and she seemed ready to show an intelligent interest in railway stations and in facts relating to the construction and performances of engines. Then she put on her wreath and ran down to the river to see how she looked in it.

"It will do," she said on her return. "And now I know everything about you, and you don't know anything about me."

Everything she said perplexed Lindley a little, and everything she did charmed him.

"I only know what I've seen, of course," said Lindley, "and one thing that I heard."

"What's that?"

"I'd rather not tell."

"You must." She spoke imperiously. "No matter what it is. You must tell me at once."

"I was told that your mother was an atheist. But I don't mind that," he added eagerly.

"It is not at all true," said Sonya. "Mother has explained it all to me a great many times, and I can tell you all about it. And it's principally this—you've got to be good."

"I've been told that, too."

"There's some more. You must never believe things without thinking about them, because that is cowardly. And you must never pretend to yourself that you believe things which you don't really, because that's false. And you must not expect to know much about God, and to begin with it is quite enough to know that there is God. And you must never know when you're beaten, and you must never give up. I haven't got it all in the right order, but that's the kind of thing mother tells me. Do you understand it? I do."

"Well," said Lindley, "it shows that your mother is not an atheist, anyhow. I'm not particularly good at understanding that kind of thing, though I get a good deal of it at home. They're always at me about being good. I suppose it's all right, but I get rather sick of it. Would you like to see the butterflies I've got?"

"Yes." She stared into the collecting-box with wide eyes of horror and said nothing.

"What do you think of them?" he asked anxiously. He could see so certainly that this was not going well.

"Do many boys collect butterflies?" she asked.

"Rather many."

"I wish you'd stop it. I don't want you to do it."

This was better, for he felt that what he

would most like would be to do something for Sonya Fielding, and especially if it were something quite unreasonable and involving self-sacrifice—as, for instance, the premature arrest of a promising entomological collection.

“I’ll never get any more. I give up collecting from this very minute, and I won’t go on again, no matter who asks me to. I promise it on my sacred word of honour.”

“Thank you,” she said gravely. “I like you very much indeed, Lindley. I liked you when I saw you last night and again to-day, and I’ve gone on liking you more and more. You got the lilies for me, and you’ve promised me not to kill any more butterflies.”

“But you don’t like me as much as I do you.” He trembled at his audacity.

“Good-bye,” she said. “I’m going away now, and I leave Haxteth to-morrow. So perhaps we’ll never see each other again. But I’ll remember you.”

She gave him her hand, and for some seconds they stared hard at each other. Then, suddenly and rapidly, she put her arms round his neck and kissed him. He watched her running away from him, down the thread of a path among the high bracken, with her garland still twined in her hair.

Then he dropped down on the ground, and lay there gazing up into the sky. It was all over then. And in consequence everything seemed

quite different. He repeated her words, "I like you very much." There was no mistake about it; she had said it. After a while he fell asleep.

He must have slept long, for the sun was getting low when he awoke again. He would have to hurry home. He gathered together the collecting boxes and the ingenious folding-net, never to be used again, packed them into his satchel, and set off at a run.

Suddenly he pulled up short. He had heard voices in the plantation above him. There was the deep voice of a man speaking excitedly and a girl's tremulous laugh. Well, visitors to the Dyke were common enough. Lindley was merely glad that they had not come earlier, and he was dead tired. Well, he would not have to set his butterflies that night, as he would most conscientiously have done but for Sonya. Anna did not even ask him to show what he had caught; she was full of astounding and interesting news—Aunt Emmeline was to marry Mr. Gold, the curate at St. Augustine's. Lindley was not very deeply moved. He supposed that explained why he had been sent with those letters for Mr. Gold. He noticed that his father seemed preoccupied and not in good spirits. And he was glad enough to get off to bed an hour earlier than usual. Of his meeting with Sonya he said no word to any one.

Mr. Kays was not in good spirits at all. He had had his interview with Mr. Gold, and had

come on no sufficient reason for attempting to break off the engagement. But he distrusted Mr. Gold thoroughly—distrusted his excessive politeness, and his animal face, and his vague talk about a college friendship with Lord Harpole and the probability that one day he would get one of the numerous livings in Harpole's gift. He did not and could not believe that Mr. Gold was ever in the slightest degree in love with Emmeline Kays. Mr. Gold spoke of her as an ideal woman for the wife of a clergyman, one who took the deepest interest in church work, and would be in consequence his constant helper and sympathizer. Mr. Kays believed in his heart that it was chiefly a question of money. He did not like Mr. Gold, he could not produce good and definite reason for objecting to the marriage, and Emmeline was old enough to judge for herself. Here at least was no sudden infatuation with a man of whom she knew nothing. Mr. Gold had been at St. Augustine's for nearly two years; he explained to Mr. Kays how every day he realized more and more that in Emmeline he would find a suitable help-mate, and had only held back from a doubt whether he had the right to ask a woman to marry him who, for the present, at any rate, had an income that exceeded his own. Mr. Gold was just a little too full of explanation for the taste of Mr. Kays.

The interview was, after all, a brief one. Mr. Gold did not have to keep Flossie Camp waiting

at their trysting-place at the Dyke. It was a difficult position for him. His engagement with Emmeline Kays would be made public; she wished it, and he could offer no objection. And he did not want to give up that fascinating girl, Flossie Camp; he could not give her up. Their acquaintance had begun with a flirtation across the counter. Mr. Gold was musical, and was selecting anthems for Easter Sunday. It had continued and grown. So far as Mr. Gold could love anybody it is probable that he loved Flossie. He had told her many times that he loved her—had told her so in tender words and a rather beautiful voice. He knew the depth of her half-educated infatuation for him, the one deep thing in a shallow nature. He had told her, too, that he could never marry her, and had even persuaded her that this heightened the pathos and romance of their association.

But he had not told her that he intended to marry two hundred a year and Miss Emmeline Kays. That was to be done at their meeting in the plantation on the Dyke.

But not at first. At first he poured out excitedly the protests of his adoration. He only lived for their brief meetings. "Dear little girl, dear little Flossie, you cannot even dream all that you are to me!" And so on. Her tremulous laugh had veiled transparently her delight in this love. Lindley had heard them at this moment on his homeward way—heard

them without recognition and without much interest.

And then Mr. Theodore Gold seemed depressed, in a manly way, as one who was battling by himself and in silence to put something from his mind. It succeeded. Suddenly she broke out—

"You're unhappy, Theo. It's no good trying to hide it. I love you too well not to see it."

"Perhaps if I were to tell you, you might not understand. And perhaps you might hate me. Don't you think I had better bear my trouble alone?"

He looked very much like an actor, a swarthy, handsome actor of about forty, and he was fluent enough in the kind of acting that imposes on the Flossie Camps.

"No, no!" she cried. "I shall always love you—nothing can ever change that. Do tell me everything."

"It is what I have been expecting for a long time. I have had a letter from Harpole." He had dazzled her with Lord Harpole on previous occasions.

"Yes? What does he say?"

"You must know that Harpole is a very different man now from the Harpole I knew at Cambridge. At that time I am ashamed to say that I was very wild—reckless and extravagant." (He confessed most easily the sins he had never committed.) "So was Harpole; so, in fact, were

all the men in our set. There was hardly anything we wouldn't do. But Harpole, since his succession and marriage, has changed greatly. He and I have seen something of the tragedy and gravity of life now. His letter to me is of importance."

She clutched his hand. "The living?" she said. "But I thought you wanted it? And we could still meet often—Penfold's not so very far away."

"Well," said the vain man, "Harpole has always had an absurdly high opinion of my abilities and of the position I should take in the church. The living that he offers me—it will fall vacant in a year or so—is one of great importance, and it may lead to greater things still. It is not Penfold."

"And you do not want to leave me."

"I think, dear little girl, it will break my heart to leave you. It will well-nigh kill me. But you have not heard the worst. Harpole objects to unmarried priests, and he makes it a condition that I shall marry. He says—truly enough—that he is giving me a great chance, a chance to show the stuff I am made of, a chance to do a thousand-fold more in God's service than I could expect to do here in Haxteth. And he says that if I refuse this reasonable condition he has finished with me."

Flossie looked at her lover with staring eyes. Could he, after all, be meaning to ask her to marry him? The next words told her.



"He hints that it would be better for me to marry a woman with some private means—large charities are expected—and a woman thoroughly conversant with church work and really interested in it. There is such a woman here in Haxteth; she is middle-aged and rather plain than not. I have the greatest esteem and respect for her. She would marry me. What am I to do?"

"Do you love her?" Flossie asked.

"Love is not in our own control. I have never loved—and can never love—any one but you, Flossie. And even if you had the money, the special knowledge, and the interest in church work, I would never marry you in this way. I would never insult our love by turning it into marriage at any man's bidding. And I would never expose your youth and beauty and grace to the virulent jealousy of the old dames and dowagers of a cathedral city, old women who would rake up all your antecedents, who would——"

"Yes, I know," said Flossie Camp. "And what are you going to do?"

"Neither way can there be much happiness for me. If you tell me to give up Harpole, my old friend, and to throw away my one opportunity of doing great service in the cause to which I have vowed myself, I will do it. You will never know what the sacrifice means, and in that case it may be that the mission field will——"

"No, no! What's the other thing?"

"Marriage—at least a formal association under that name—with Miss Emmeline Kays."

"I don't think I should ever be jealous of Miss Kays—no, not even if you married her. But what about me, then? What changes would it make?"

"Until the living fell vacant—in a year or more—no change at all. We should still meet. I cannot starve my heart altogether, and your love will still be my dearest blessing. After that we must arrange what we best can. A year or two may bring fresh possibilities. Harpole is not the only friend I have who thinks highly of me—goodness knows why. Some way of escape may offer itself. And in the mean time I should not have ruined—ruined irretrievably—my prospects."

Flossie Camp stared at her light gloves as if she were looking for a speck on them.

"Yes," she said at last. "You must propose to her."

"Then, I will," said the man, who had been accepted by Miss Kays the night before.

"She'll accept you," said Flossie, bitterly.

"Come," said Theodore, "let us put it away from our minds. We meet so rarely and so briefly. And I love you so dearly, darling."

The dusk had deepened to dark when two hours later they stood in the road outside the Dyke. At the public house where Lindley had

stopped, a closed carriage was waiting for them. The red-armed woman watched it drive away, and the expression of her face was not pleasant.

Flossie Camp sank back on the cushions as if to sleep. Indeed, Theodore Gold thought that she was asleep when her tired voice broke into the silence.

"I hope Mary won't get staring at me to-night, the way she sometimes does."

## CHAPTER VI

### PUNISHMENT

LINDLEY KAYS was very absent-minded in school next morning. An unintelligent and unimaginative master explained the *oratio obliqua*. He spoke of its difficulties until he had succeeded in giving his class a mesmeric horror of it, and reduced them to a state in which they could not think, put all the verbs into the subjunctive, and gave up hope. Lindley, who had paid no attention whatever to the stupid lecture, kept to the good old indicative to which he had been used.

"And that means, Kays, that you have not even tried to understand. You will stand out here, please, for the rest of the morning. It's of no use to attempt to teach you anything."

The head-master swooped down. He had had a tiring time in London, and the hot weather tried him. At best he was not a good-tempered or merciful man.

"Why have you been made to stand out?" he asked.

"For not attending, sir, and using the indicative."

The form-master came up, and the two men conferred together. The form-master gave Lindley a character that would have hanged a dog. The head-master turned to Lindley again.

"There's only one way of treating boys of your kind. Go on up to my desk."

The head-master followed Lindley, and rang his bell twice. Every master stopped speaking, every form stopped work, and listened in servile silence. Lindley knew that he was in for a public thrashing, and that he must not squeal or look frightened. The head-master took a long cane, told Lindley where to stand, and addressed the school on the subject of Lindley's wickedness and ingratitude.

"If I find myself unable to grant whole holidays in future, you will have this boy to thank for it."

It was rather a dirty trick. For his own sake he meant always to give as many extra holidays as were permitted by the governors, but he wanted to make Lindley unpopular.

After the first few cuts Lindley felt very little pain; he had never been thrashed before, and had wondered at first if he would have to cry out. Every cut left a mark on his back that was there for weeks afterwards. And the strokes went on and on, and Lindley stood shaking, but silent. It was a severe and prolonged thrashing. He heard a chair pushed back quickly at the further end of the room, and at the next

stroke he went over. He was up again in a moment, but the cane had been thrown aside now.

"Go back to your place," said the head-master. He had to repeat the order before Lindley seemed to understand it.

Lindley was very white as he walked down the room. His teeth were tightly pressed together and his lips a little drawn back from them. He did not look pretty.

He took his stand out in front of the class as before. His hands went over his pockets carefully, hunting for his knife. He meant to open it under cover of the pocket, and then stab it quickly into his throat. He wanted to die—to die immediately.

Where was his knife? Where had he had it last? He remembered. He had used it to cut the water-lilies for Sonya. He had left it probably in the clothes he wore on the Dyke. And Sonya was going away. It was just possible he might see her on the station platform; there was an up-train at twelve-forty, not the quickest in the day, but reasonably good. As he thought of Sonya the storm within his heart died down. These other things did not matter.

No, they did not matter. His back and shoulders burned and ached. He felt sick. He wondered if it would look like funking if he asked for leave to sit down, and he decided that it would look very much like it. No, these

things did not matter ; and, after all, there were, apparently, circumstances under which it was immoral to use the indicative. If only he could know what people wanted, and why they wanted it, things would go easier with him. He looked at the mantelpiece, and the straight line of it ran and trembled in quick little curves. The floor seemed to be shaking and—

“ You can sit down now, Kays.” It was Mr. Lidgett, the fool of a form-master, who had at last decided that Lindley looked ill. Lindley got back to his desk and began to read very hard from a book that was upside down.

In the mean time the head-master, Mr. Forth, had gone down from his platform to confer with Mr. Doran at the other end of the room. Mr. Doran was the first classical master, and he was not afraid of the head-master ; he did not respect Mr. Forth very much. One of Doran’s many failings was that he did not respect any one or anything very much.

Mr. Forth took with him some papers in order that it might appear to the boys that it was those papers which were being discussed. He was very angry, but he smiled. Boys must not know that their masters can disagree.

“ Doran,” said Mr. Forth, “ when I unfortunately had to cane young Kays just now, you suddenly pushed back your chair and stood up.”

Doran nodded.

"It was a very foolish thing to do. It might so easily be misunderstood."

"Don't see it," said Doran.

"It looked like a protest almost—as if you thought I had gone too far—as if you were trying to stop me."

"Then it looked exactly what it was. And if you had not stopped immediately, as you did, I should have gone still further. I don't like giving evidence at inquests."

"How can you be so perfectly absurd? I knew exactly what I was doing. It may have had the appearance of a heavy punishment; but that is merely a trick to inspire others with a wholesome terror; one makes it look worse than it really is. Why, the boy never made a sound."

"Look here, Mr. Forth; I'm not a baby. I know exactly what happened. You lost your temper, and you thrashed young Kays as no boy ought to be thrashed. You knew that when I got up, and you stopped. You——"

"I can't permit you to talk in this way to me," said Forth. "I begin to think I've allowed you too much latitude. If you're dissatisfied, the remedy's in your own hands."

"You mean that I can resign?"

"Of course."

Doran smiled. "There are a good many other things one might do. We can talk about them afterwards."

But afterwards Mr. Forth had changed his



point of view. He was quite sure that Doran had done what he did in a friendly spirit—a humane spirit too. As it happened, it was misjudged. No more need be said.

Doran left him, and talked to Lindley's form-master. "Why did you get young Kays thrashed this morning?"

"Well, what would you do if you'd been trying to ram the *oratio obliqua* into his thick head for the best part of an hour, and then at the end of the time he'd learned absolutely nothing?"

"I should say I was a damned fool, and not fit to teach anything."

"That's all very well; but you don't know young Kays."

"True. And I fancy he might be worth knowing."

At twelve, Lindley got quickly away from many who jeered and some who sympathized, and went down to the station. He examined the twelve-forty from end to end, and waited until it steamed out of the station, but Sonya and her mother had left two hours before. Well, she would come back some day; she would certainly come back; and one could wait.

Lindley decided to say nothing about the caning. Mr. Forth had punished him because he had required and received punishment from Mr. Lidgett. He expected that he would be punished again by his father, because he had

been caned by Mr. Forth—if his father got to know about it. And the punishment would be still worse if he did not confess and his father learned what had happened from some other source.

He was only arguing from previous experience. And in this case he was wrong. If Mr. Kays had had the slightest idea of the brutal way in which his young son had been handled, it would have gone hardly with the head-master. Mr. Kays did what he thought to be his duty to his boy, and did not always do it very intelligently; but he was not the man to forgive intentional physical cruelty. Had he known, Mr. Forth would have been driven out of Haxteth.

But he did not know; and Lindley had no idea that here was an exception to the general rule, that one was punished by one's father because one had been punished by one's school-master.

So at dinner, to keep the subject of conversation well away from school, he announced that he had given up the collecting of moths and butterflies. It was not a happy chance; they had all laughed at him for collecting, but they all disapproved of him for giving it up. Mr. Kays said that it showed an undependable character, and quoted Scripture. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," he said, with a shake of the head, as he sawed skilfully at the boiled beef. Walter proved by figures that, one

way and another, nearly fifteen shillings had been spent on collecting apparatus, and he supposed it was money thrown away. Anna reminded him that she had given him, by his own request, the folding-net as a birthday present. But Aunt Emmeline, happy and smiling, said that no doubt Lindley would think better of it. He should have left it at that. But the obstinate little fool said that he had quite made up his mind, and the hammering began again.

What did it matter? It was all for Sonya.

But this was a dark day. It was discovered that Lindley—Lindley of the excellent appetite—greedy Lindley—was not eating his dinner. He had done his best, and it had proved impossible for him. He could not eat. Accused of sulking, he managed to answer brightly and with a laugh. Was he ill? Not a bit; it just happened so sometimes. Mr. Kays hinted at sweet-shop excesses, and Lindley, glad of the explanation, denied nothing.

At school in the afternoon, Lindley was called up to Mr. Forth's desk. He rather expected another thrashing. But it was not that; it was merely that Mr. Forth had a twinge of conscience.

"I want to have just a few words with you, Kays. I was compelled to cane you this morning, and you know why."

"Yes, sir," said Lindley, humbly.

"And why was it?"

"For using the indicative."

Mr. Forth looked at him sharply. No; it was quite evident that the boy spoke in good faith, and without the remotest intention of being impertinent.

"Not at all. It was for the inattention which caused you to make the blunder; it was because I found from Mr. Lidgett that you were habitually given to dreaminess and want of concentration. I had to give you a very sharp lesson. It was painful for you, and very painful indeed for me. I hope it will never have to be repeated. Now, I do not want that incident to leave any ill-feeling between us. I bear none towards you; if you show that you are trying to improve I shall be as ready to reward as I have been to punish. Far readier, in fact. And I hope you feel no ill-will towards me."

"No," said Lindley. It was not a lie. Against fate or the head-master—fate's acting-manager—it was hopeless to struggle or to feel ill-will.

"Very well. Now then. A letter has come by post, addressed to you at the school. Only the boys boarding in my house are allowed to have their letters addressed that way."

(Was it to be another thrashing, after all? thought Lindley.)

"In the ordinary course," Mr. Forth went on, "that letter would be handed to your father, and he would be asked to take what measures he

thought fit to prevent anything of the kind happening again."

"I didn't know there was going to be any letter for me," pleaded Lindley.

"Quite so. It is addressed in a juvenile hand, and is probably from some boy friend of yours. Perhaps there would be no great harm done if I passed it over this time, and allowed you to have it."

Lindley trembled with excitement. The letter was most certainly from Sonya.

"And I am anxious to give you some practical proof that I have only been acting for your good and bear no grudge against you. So, if I have no complaint against you this afternoon, you can ask me for the letter when school is over."

"Thank you very much, sir."

"And—er—that will do."

Lindley, with his back and shoulders aching and burning, worked like a slave that afternoon. And he received his letter. He took it to his bedroom, locked the door, and tore open the letter. The name "Sonya" stared at him in round hand. The letter, which bore neither date nor address, ran as follows :—

"DEAR LINDLEY,

"Mother says one kind of collecting is all right, and so you may go on if you like, but I would rather you did something else. I have asked to learn to swim. We are going to Paris

for quite a long time. One day I shall see you again. I like you. Love and kisses from

"SONYA."

\* \* \* \* \*

Lindley went to bed as soon as his evening work was done. His back hurt, and he felt that he could not sit up any longer. He lay in bed, with Sonya's letter under his pillow. He did not cry, but the pain kept him awake, and made him moan now and again.

Anna, as she passed his door, candle in hand, on her way to bed, heard the moan and came in quickly.

"What's the matter, Lindley? Are you crying?"

"No. I'm all right."

"You're not. I heard. What is it?"

"You promise not to tell?"

"Yes, of course."

"My back hurts a bit."

"Poor Lindley! Let me have a look." She held the candle closer. It nearly dropped from her hand. Her eyes gleamed. "What devil has done this?" she cried.

"Hush! I was caned this morning. Don't make a row. Mind, you promised."

"I want to kill that man! No, I won't tell. Lie still a moment while I fetch something for it."

She came back quickly on tip-toe with the ointment in her hand, and did the best she could for him. Neither of them spoke for a while.

"That's much better," said Lindley. "Thanks."

She burst into a fit of sobbing. "I can't bear it! I can't bear it!" she cried. This was unlike Anna, and Lindley wondered. He tried to comfort her in a clumsy way. She said good night at last, kissing him many times.

Lindley lit his candle and read Sonya's letter once more. Then he put out the light, and gave a great sigh of relief. Soon he fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REPORT

IT happened, a few days later, that Mr. Lidgett, suffering severely from toothache, obtained leave to take a day with the dentist. The classes were in consequence slightly rearranged, and for the first time Lindley took his Ovid and his exercises to Mr. Doran. Doran's teaching was unconventional, clever, charlatanian, and impressive. He knew the passage in Ovid by heart, and used no book. He read out the first sentence from the exercise book, "I say that Balbus is about to build a wall," and asserted that he could teach a sick cuckoo to write a better exercise book than that. He made his own sentences, and took Balbus to the baths and to dine in an interesting (and expurgated) fashion with Trimalchio. He allowed Balbus to tell his friends afterwards what was said at the dinner. "And how does Balbus do it?" Lindley got hold of the main principle of *oratio obliqua* without hearing the words said. He saw the old Roman life. Latin was no longer a box of stupid and difficult conundrums to vex school-



boys with. Doran taught rapidly, energetically, almost furiously, as if the loss of a moment of time would mean instant destruction to the entire human race. He was never at a loss for an apt illustration or an amusing simile. Whenever he got a fair chance he praised; and always he encouraged.

"Ting-ting," went the bell on the head-master's desk. Lindley rubbed his eyes; it seemed impossible to believe that the morning's school was over; time had taken golden wings. It was the generally expressed opinion that Doran knew more than all the other masters put together.

"I'd sooner swot with him than slack with Lidgett," said Lindley.

"So'd I," said another boy.

"I wish the cow who wrote that exercise book had heard him," said a third. "Anybody going to bathe?"

"Me," said Lindley, drawing the folded towel from under his waistcoat.

As the class-room emptied, Mr. Forth went across to Doran. Mr. Forth was very genial.

"You make more noise and you use more chalk than all the rest of us put together."

Doran grinned. "True. But, then, I teach. And chalk is cheap."

"And what do you make of that lot?"

Doran shook his head. "Not much. Two of them are good."

"The younger Frampton's one, of course."

"Yes, he's one. But he's not so good as the other—the boy you thrashed—young Kays."

"You think he'd be scholarship form if we could keep him and send him up?"

"He's young to prophecy about. But I would bet on it myself."

"It's always the way. We get some stupid owl whose father has got money, and we are expected to do something with him at the University. And the clever lot get taken away at sixteen—the chaps we could really score with—and go into their father's shops."

"Old Kays has got a biggish place. If it were put to him that his boy was promising, and likely to get a good scholarship, he might be inclined to give him a chance."

"Just possible," said Forth, stroking his chin. "I've got the reports in my study. I wish, if you aren't busy, you'd come over with me for a glass of sherry and talk about this."

"Certainly," said Doran.

Mr. Forth was always keen to find out which of the younger boys would repay special attention; possibly, too, the idea of some reparation to Lindley was present in his mind. The headmaster's house adjoined the school. His study was a big and comfortably furnished room. It was his custom after morning school to drink a glass of sherry—that almost forgotten wine in

which he was rather learned—and the decanter and glasses stood ready on their tray.

Mr. Forth went over the big pile of reports on the table. At the end of the term every parent received a report on his boy's progress, filled in by the different masters. These were already in preparation.

"Let me see, now," said Forth. "Here we are. Kays. Under 'Classics,' Lidgett has written, 'Most erratic and inattentive.'"

"Most boys that are going to do anything are more or less erratic. And Kays attends if you interest him and talk reasonably. Of course, Lidgett's right, and he's a sound man too; his methods would be right with most boys."

"Yes, yes, I know that. But it's not the kind of thing to make old Kays run his boy for Cambridge. Then, here's Thompson on the mathematics. He's put, 'Either too stupid or too lazy to learn.' I've warned Thompson against that kind of thing," said Mr. Forth, angrily.

"Stop his salary, and pay him by capitation grants. He'll write very different reports then."

"Come, come," said Forth, "That's very ill-natured and unfounded." Mr. Forth depended largely on capitation grants himself. "Then there's English subjects. 'Can do well when he likes. Particularly strong in Scripture.' That might pass."

"And what are the head-master's 'General remarks?'"

"I see," said Mr. Forth, "that I've written, 'Most unsatisfactory. Has narrowly escaped expulsion.' It's too strong, and I should have altered it in any case. I—well, I was too much influenced by what Lidgett said. A sound man, but I should have done better to use my own judgment." He tore the report in half and threw it in the waste-paper basket. "We must do this all over again," he said.

"And more optimistically."

"Quite so. It's not fair to send in a report like that about a really promising boy. It makes too much of small offences—that want of attention is generally half the fault of the teacher. I believe Kays could afford to send the boy up, if only it were strongly represented to him, and you say he would bring credit to the school."

"I say he will be good enough to win an open scholarship—possibly a big one—so far as I can judge. I may be all wrong."

But Mr. Forth knew from experience that Doran was particularly clever in picking out the boys that would do something. He took pencil and paper.

"Excuse me, just half a moment," he said. He wrote rapidly. "Now then," he continued, "I've recast that report. For Latin I've put, 'Remarkable ability. Shows great promise, and improves rapidly.' I'll get Lidgett to put that. Thompson

must alter the mathematical report to 'A little slow at this subject, but has made progress.' And for English we will have, 'Always satisfactory. Particularly strong in Scripture. Has made a distinct advance this term.' That's much the same as before but—er—amplified. Then, for myself, I have written, 'This is a very good report. I have myself noticed his eagerness to improve and to get rid of any fault that is pointed out to him.'"

"Pointed out to him with a cane," suggested Doran, grinning.

"Well, I caned him for continued inattention. You had not to complain of that this morning."

"Certainly not."

"There you are, then. And after the report's gone, I'll see old Kays, or write to him. Now then, there's another point."

"Well?" said Doran.

"You won't, I hope, get—er—touchy at what I'm going to say. You've done well here, and I value your work. And in many of your opinions I sympathize. But is it wise to say what you do, and in print? You know what these powerful parents are—it does not take much to frighten them. Talk spreads. Then our numbers go down—and where are we?"

"What do you mean, particularly?"

"I mean that article of yours, 'Religious Intoxication,' in this week's *English Review*."

"Well, it's not signed. And nobody here

except yourself knows that I wrote it, or that I write at all."

"That may be; but these things do get about in a most extraordinary manner. One cannot be too careful. I don't wish to be narrow-minded, but you know that schoolmasters have to be more or less *sub rosa* in many points. Thought is free, but we do not always say what we think."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Not to stop you from writing, of course. It must be a pleasure to you."

"It is certainly a source of income. And in that way it puts me in a more independent position here than I should enjoy otherwise. And, going a step further, the independence makes me willing and able to resent any order which is clearly unreasonable."

"There you go!" said Mr. Forth excitably. "I'm not ordering. I don't dream of ordering. A friendly suggestion, nothing more. I only ask you to be a little more careful, and to keep off religious topics."

"I don't admit," said Doran, "that there's any cause for your nervousness. If I had signed my name to that article, and twenty like it, even then it wouldn't have mattered. But since you *are* nervous, and since friendliness and sherry have a softening effect on me, you shall have your own way."

"That's very good of you. After all, there are plenty of other subjects."

"True. School reports, for instance."

Mr. Forth's smile was a little sickly. Doran laughed.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I won't do it."

And so it happened that one fine morning at the beginning of the holidays, Lindley found, to his surprise, that he was a very good boy and much admired. His father read out that report at dinner, and Lindley blushed. His father presented him with five shillings, Aunt Emmeline, growing younger daily, said that she had expected Lindley's report to be good, but this was even more than she had expected. Walter showed less enthusiasm; when he was at the school himself he had won a conduct prize and been rather good at arithmetic; good reports had been a matter of course with him. But Lindley had provided a background on which his exposed virtues showed startling and effective.

He did not understand it at all himself. The horrible idea even came to him that they might have put his name on some other boy's report by mistake, and that the mistake would subsequently be rectified. In the mean time he had five shillings; and he bought a red leather case for Sonya's letter, and a seal with the letter "A" on it for Anna, and still had money for the morrow.

Shortly before Mr. Kays' annual departure for the seaside he happened to meet Mr. Forth in the street, and would have passed on with

a respectful salutation. Mr. Forth stopped him.

"Can you spare me a minute, Mr. Kays? I wanted to speak to you about your boy, Lindley."

"Certainly," said Mr. Kays. "We were very pleased with his report." He used his shop voice.

"And the boy deserved it. Now, I wanted to ask you, if I might, what you intend doing with him?"

"He will join his brother in the business."

"You haven't thought about Oxford or Cambridge for him?"

"Oh no! Oh, most certainly not! If I had intended to send either of them, it would have been the elder."

Excellent fellow he was, too. "I never had a boy in the school that gave less trouble. But, you know, Lindley has the brains. Let me have the handling of that boy for five years, and I'm pretty sure he would do us credit."

Mr. Kays looked pleased, but he remained firm. It would not be fair to Walter. Besides, there was the question of expense. It could not be thought about.

But he talked over this afterwards with Aunt Emmeline.

"Couldn't it possibly be managed?" she asked. "Father was at Oxford."

"Did it do him much good?" asked her brother, grimly.



"Anyhow, I am convinced that Lindley is not suited to business."

"I hope you won't tell him so," said Mr. Kays. "He'll go into the shop, in any case."

She would have stuck to her point; but Mr. Gold was waiting for her, and she hurried away.

She did not join the Kays family at the seaside. Later, she was to go on a visit to "Theo's people" when he took his holiday; she had already had the kindest of letters from his mother.

Lindley enjoyed his month by the sea. There were (nobody knew why) no family prayers when Mr. Kays was on his holiday. Lindley enjoyed being pointed out as the boy who dived from the pier-head. He loved ruins, and there were three of them in the neighbourhood. He grew brighter and healthier that month.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MARY CAMP INTERVENES

THE marriage of Aunt Emmeline was arranged for January in the following year. It was now October, and she was buying things and making things. In all of them great severity and simplicity were the note. "Theo prefers it," she said. He was the standard by which she settled everything now. His tastes and prejudices became hers at once, and without an effort. It pleased and flattered him.

Every Sunday Theodore Gold walked home with Emmeline, and shared the midday meal of the Kays family. With Mr. Kays he was respectful and embarrassed; the respect was due to the grey hair of Mr. Kays, and the embarrassment—well, what on earth was he to say to this stern low-church ironmonger? With Walter, Mr. Gold regularly exchanged a short review of the week's weather; Walter was satisfied with this. It seemed to prove that his future uncle was affable and not light-minded. All the same, Walter asked searching and business-like questions of his father as to his income and

settlements. In such matters Walter was old beyond his years.

"He will insure," said Mr. Kays. "That is quite arranged."

"Couldn't his friend, Lord Harpole, do something definite?"

Mr. Kays was afraid of saying too much. Things could not be discussed with a son, however elderly, quite as if he were an equal.

"We don't quite know how far that goes. I won't say why, but I don't build upon it."

Mr. Gold was attentive to Anna. She was pretty, in a simple fearless way. There, where he felt most inclination, he met with least response. With Lindley he was patronizingly facetious.

"Going to get the first prize for Sanscrit and Conic Sections this term?" he asked.

"There are no prizes this term, and I don't do those things," said Lindley, gravely.

Mr. Theodore Gold laughed heartily, as an intimation that Lindley, having no sense of humour, had made a fool of himself. Lindley looked at him with wondering eyes.

"I hate that beast!" said Anna, privately, to Lindley, one day when Mr. Gold had been familiarly purring around her.

"So do I," said Lindley. "But you'd better not let them find it out."

The "them" meant the older generation generally, a clannish people; if one of their order

were disliked by any of the enemy, the entire clan resented it.

Mr. Kays addressed Mr. Gold by his surname. Aunt Emmeline hinted at "Theodore."

"In time," said Mr. Kays. "Remember that I have only known him these last few months. That will come. Theodore, after the marriage, certainly."

He watched carefully. Gold was not in the least in love, but there was nothing to contradict the high esteem that he professed. Emmeline was certainly a most suitable wife for a clergyman. And undoubtedly these marriages of judgment had more success than marriages of romantic love. That Emmeline should be in love at all irritated Mr. Kays; he read it as a lapse of self-respect in his sister. She was pathetically anxious to find others sharing her high opinion of Theodore.

"Do you think him a handsome man?" she asked Lindley.

"Yes, very handsome indeed," said the good-natured little poltroon.

The same question was put to Anna.

"I always think that I ought to think him better-looking than I do," said Anna, who wished to put it mercifully.

"But that means nothing," said Aunt Emmeline. On the contrary, it meant a good deal.

Nor was Aunt Emmeline altogether pleased with the way in which her brother at times spoke of Mr. Gold and herself.

"We shan't see much of you after the marriage," said Mr. Kays. "I can foresee it. Never mind. Your tradesman brother won't force himself upon you, when you're settled in the Rectory."

"It is unkind of you to talk like that, James. And for a time I shall be a poor curate's wife."

"Still, Lord Harpole a most intimate friend of your husband's—the rectory's bound to come."

His manner indicated his doubt of any connection whatever between the two men.

But the connection existed; most of Mr. Gold's statements had some kind of fact foundation. At Cambridge young Sarage and Gold had been friends, at a time when the probability that Sarage would ever become Lord Harpole seemed slight enough. They were by no means inseparables, but they saw each other fairly often. On leaving Cambridge they drifted apart, and since that time they had only met once, some time after Mr. Gold's ordination. The meeting was a chance one in London; Harpole was civil, and took Gold off to lunch at the Reform; but he was less enthusiastic than in the old days. Warmed by the Burgundy, Gold brought himself to imply beyond mistake what it was he wanted.

"Look here," said Lord Harpole, "I'll speak plainly, if you don't mind. It's not the easy thing you think. Every time anything of the kind falls vacant, or looks as if it might possibly fall vacant, they simply come about me like

bees. I could show you letters—sheafs of them. There are married men, men who've put in twenty years' work, who want these things, and they've got some very old friends of my family at their back—some of them at least. Now, you see, it isn't easy, is it? I don't want to jabber about a sense of duty, but I can tell you I have to look out what I'm doing, and even when I do——”

“You've said enough,” said Gold. “I don't want to bother you, I wouldn't have mentioned it, but——”

“Wait a bit. I'm not giving you a refusal altogether, though it's a refusal for the present. You're young; you're not married. You've no one dependent on you; you can very well hold your own now. Come to me in five or six years' time, tell me the kind of work you've done, and tell me that you would marry if you could afford it. I won't forget you, and I'll try to do something then, though even then you must not expect too much.”

There was just that amount of truth and no more behind Mr. Gold's variegated stories.

He had written now to Lord Harpole. He had said that he wished to marry a lady a few years older than himself, who had given her life to Church work. She was the daughter of an old Oxford man of good family (a splendid old fellow by all accounts) who had been rash and unfortunate and lost all his money. He gave

the name Emmeline Kays, and he said nothing about the ironmonger. On the whole a characteristic letter. Lord Harpole had replied favourably if indefinitely. The engagement was public property in Haxteth. And these things were daggers in the heart of Theodore Gold just now.

They were daggers in his heart as he sat in his lodgings with his sermon paper in front of him, and the merciless lodging-house lamp on the table. Now and again a belated daddy-longlegs unhooked itself from its dependent position on the white ceiling and (image of a damned Psyche) circled round, dived into the globe, and buzzed to death. On the sermon paper was written in his delicate minute hand, "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." He was facile in the composition of sermons, and he was admired for them. Now he could write nothing. There were daggers in his heart and brain, stabbing recurrently.

He had known for three days now that he must marry Flossie, or his whole life must be haunted. It was marriage or death for her; it was marriage or murder for him. So far he had said nothing definite; he had comforted; he had asked for a little time to see what best could be arranged. "But the days are going on," Flossie had sobbed.

Emmeline's income would be given up. All

hopes from Lord Harpole would be at an end. And Flossie, he knew it, was not the wife for him. The curacy that he now held would be given up, too, of course. There was more than a possibility of absolute penury. Haxteth would talk, and guess what it did not know. It was horrible, horrible! But his laugh (if ever he laughed) would not be cut short by some frozen blade of memory; he would not, as he looked in the glass, fear to see the eyes of a wrecked woman staring over his shoulder. He was startled by a rap at the door.

"Come in."

The elderly servant of the lodgings entered.

"Miss Camp has called, and wishes to see you for a minute if disengaged."

"Certainly," said Mr. Gold. "Show Miss Camp in."

He was furious. Flossie need not have done this; it was distrustful, and looked like an attempt to force his hand. He had told her in so many words never to come near his lodgings.

But the veiled woman that had come up the stairs so softly that she seemed suddenly to be materialized in the dark of the doorway was not Flossie. It was her sister Mary.

Mr. Gold kept his presence of mind; some church music had been ordered; the visit might be a mere matter of business.

"Good evening, Miss Camp," he said easily.



"Come in and sit down, won't you? And what can I do for you?"

She came in, shutting the door very carefully and noiselessly, and took a chair quite close to Mr. Gold—unnecessarily close, he thought. Then she put back her veil, and her face told it him before her words spoke it.

"I've come to tell you that I know—I know all about it."

Her face was white, but she was not shaking or nervous. Hatred was stifled away in her eyes. The voice was quiet. The manner was for the moment almost respectful—for the long social habit held her.

His smile stiffened on his face. He played for time—his wretched usual custom.

"I must ask you to explain yourself further."

"I've known a long time that there was something wrong. I've noticed things. But you can't speak to Flossie—she flies out at you so. One day I was on the road to the Dyke, and the woman at the public-house came out. 'Look after your sister and the parson,' she said. I asked, what parson? But no more could I get out of her. When I got home I put it to Flossie, and she said I would believe any silly lie anybody told about her, and I ought to be ashamed of myself. She said she could take care of herself. I believed that last part; she was well brought up; she knew the difference between right and wrong, and she had a spirit of her own.

That was all weeks and weeks ago. And then there was no more said ; I would try to speak sometimes, but she would never listen. Then, last night, it all came out. She had been very queer indeed in her ways for some time past. We'd sat down to supper. It was something hot, and she'd given me mine, and then sat staring at nothing. 'What,' I said, 'aren't you going to help yourself, Flossie?' And she began sobbing. I dropped my knife and fork and came round to her. 'Why, dear,' I said, 'what is it?' She broke away from me, and flung herself down on the floor. There she lay, praying to God to strike her dead. It's awful to say it, but I heard her. 'Oh, God, kill me, kill me now!' I knew what it was then. After a little while I persuaded her to get up."

Theodore Gold had risen and paced the room.

"Stop!" he said. "I can't bear this. I can't bear it."

For a moment her white-hot anger burned through.

"You devil! You brute, that brought this shame on us! Haven't you even got the courage to look at your work? Ah, it's the bitterest thing that I can't strike at you now without striking at her too!"

She had leaned forward to hiss out the words at him. Now she sank back in the chair.

"Oh, my sister, my sister!" she moaned.

Mr. Theodore Gold was broken down. "You must say that you will. The only possible reparation I am ready to make. I am anxious to marry your sister at once."

"Why didn't you tell her so in plain words before? Why have you hurt her and terrified her? You should have heard her that night as I got her to bed—no, never a word against you. That cut me to the heart, that did. I told her then that you would marry her. And that wasn't just vain comfort. I didn't think you meant to marry her then, but I knew I could make you; for I knew that I could ruin you. No, she shouldn't have gone down alone. You have said that you will marry her, though; now you have got to make me believe it."

Gold sat down at the table, helpless, but now human, the pose and the vanity and the insincerity burned out of him.

"I will do everything that you wish. Tell me what you want."

"I will," said Miss Camp, grim and business-like. "I've thought this all out to-day."

"One moment," said Gold. "Can we go to your house? We could finish the talk there. I want to see your sister. I want to tell her myself, now that I wish to marry her—that I'm sorry I ever let her doubt it."

"My sister is not in Haxteth. She left this morning for Endleigh-on-Sea. We've got an aunt there—in the music line, same as ourselves.

It is at Endleigh that you will marry her. We shall come to all that presently. We'll take things in their order. It is well known in Haxteth that you are engaged to Miss Kays—the elder one, I mean."

"It is true."

"I am sorry for her. She's good. I've heard the poor here speak of her. But I can't help it—I've got to save my sister, whoever suffers. You must write now to break off that engagement. I shall want to read the letter. There must be no allusion to my sister in it, but you can say anything else you like. You can tell her that you are leaving Haxteth to-morrow, for a time. I'll post it."

He went to another table and took note-paper and began, Miss Camp sat watching him, motionless as stone. In a few minutes he handed her the written sheet.

The letter to Emmeline was brief, bitterly repentant that he had mistaken the nature of his feelings, protesting his admiration and esteem. Marriage without love was a crime, and he could not marry her. It would not be fair to her.

"I leave Haxteth to-morrow, but your reply will be forwarded, of course."

He had stamped and addressed the envelope. Miss Camp fastened up the letter and put it in her pocket.

"To-morrow," she said, "you had better go to London."

"Not to Endleigh?"

"Railway porters have tongues."

"I see."

"While in London you must arrange to give up this curacy. You must never come back here. You can find the way for that better than I can. But there must be no allusion to my sister nor to your approaching marriage."

"I will tell the Rector that I have broken off my engagement with Miss Kays. It will be natural that I should wish to be away for a time. He is not difficult to deal with. Subsequently, it might be a question of health. A doctor that I know in London has a prejudice against Haxteth—thinks it bad for me."

"That will do. You must arrange that. I don't know about curacies."

"And how long must I remain in London?"

"The shortest time possible. From there you will go to Endleigh. You will find that my aunt believes you are secretly married to Flossie. (I gave her a wedding-ring before she went.) My aunt's a good simple soul, a great reader, and likes things to happen the way they do in books. While you are at Endleigh, you'll get married, privately, and as soon as possible, at the registrar's office there. My aunt, thinking you are married already, will have no suspicions. She will know nothing about it. It will be nobody's business down at Endleigh."

"Yes," said Gold. "There is one difficulty.

I'm a poor man, and I am giving up for a time my means of livelihood. All this costs money." It astonished him to find how simply he could speak of it.

"Do you think a woman who has a shop in Haxteth and makes it pay, is likely to forget about money? I've put fifty pounds to Flossie's credit at the Endleigh Bank—through the Bank here. I'll give her another fifty if it's wanted. The business is mine, and I dare say she thought us poorer than we were. She spent enough on clothes and finery as it was. My common sense would make me call her a fool, if I didn't love her. Once married, you must get work—teaching or a curacy, or anything—abroad for a time, if you can. The freehold of the shop belongs to us jointly, and there will be a little coming to her every year from that. That and the hundred I spoke of is all you're to expect."

"You make things easy for me," said Theodore, drearily. "I suppose I can't thank you."

"You can't," said the grim woman. "Don't begin. I'd burn my hand off for Flossie. And I'd kill you, I'd ruin you, I'd make you a by-word, if I could do it without hurting her."

"You are quite right," said Theodore. "I've no more to say, but that I love your sister too, and did not know how much I loved her, until I heard of her suffering—that shame to me."

There were still a few details to be arranged.



Gold was permitted to tell Lord Harpole that he had broken off his engagement—but not to mention Flossie's name. It was arranged that he would telegraph from London to Flossie at Endleigh.

"Good-bye," said Miss Camp, "you're not all bad, I believe. For God's sake take care of Flossie. Make me respect you one day if you can."

He followed her down the stairs; the servant of the lodgings came out to the door. "And, as you see, it's the fault of a wholesale house, sir," she continued for the servant's benefit. "But you'll get the music on Friday, certain. Good evening, and thank you, sir."

The plan was carried out, and no breath of suspicion ever arose in Haxteth. Aunt Emmeline never knew—she was spared that.

Gold obtained a chaplaincy at a continental health-resort, and it was only after many years, when his wife and child were dead, that he returned to England and was at last presented to the Penfold living.

## CHAPTER IX

### CYANIDE

**A**UNT EMMELINE'S letter of condemnation was handed to her at breakfast next morning. She read it through twice, then she put it back in the envelope and laid it beside her plate. There was a moment's absent-mindedness, and then she went back to the subject of conversation. Anna had been complaining of a marked deterioration in the quality of the bread supplied to the house.

"When I was a girl we baked at home," said Aunt Emmeline. "I remember that the bread was particularly good."

"Well, we can't bake at home now," said Anna.

"No, of course not," said Aunt Emmeline. She smiled sweetly and a little vacantly. She finished her breakfast with perfect composure.

She waited for over an hour in her room before she looked at the letter again.

"Now," she said, speaking to herself, aloud, and in a cheerful voice, "let us see what it is Theo really says."



She read it through, and the inexorable sentences had not changed. The words were written and remained. It was all over. She felt cold; it was a bright sunny morning, but the October wind blew chill into the room. She closed the window, and sat down to her writing-table with its many minute old-maidish appliances.

She wrote many letters to him, with long pauses between them, and destroyed them all. Late in the afternoon she read the last and shortest of them :—

“DEAR THEO,

“I think you are right. At least I will not blame you, or let others blame you. You made me very happy once. Good-bye, dear. I shall leave Haxteth when you return. Good-bye, dear.

“EMMELINE.”

It was not right. There was the repeated “blame you,” and she had said “good-bye” twice. She was too tired to try any more. She wondered if he would laugh at it. She took the letter to the post herself.

She made her customary appearances at dinner and supper, talked a little, and smiled a little.

When family prayers were over that night she remained behind. Her brother was trying the fastenings of the windows before turning out the gas.



"I want to speak to you for a minute, James."

The Venetian blinds clattered behind him as he turned.

"Certainly, my dear ; I thought you had gone out with the rest. You said ' Good night,' didn't you ? "

"Very likely—the force of habit, I suppose. I have to tell you, James, that my marriage will not take place ; the engagement has been broken off."

Mr. Kays was astounded. He had thought that he read his sister like an open book, but he had not guessed this.

"You surprise me. You surprise me very much. Mind, I dare say you have acted quite rightly. What was your motive ? Why did you end it ? "

"It was he who ended it."

Mr. Kays was angry. "Then all I can say is he has behaved in a——"

"Stop !" she cried. "I will not listen to a word against him."

"Oh, but I have a right to my opinions, and to express them ! And I say——"

"I will not bear it. If you go on in that way I must leave you. The reason that he gave is good and sufficient."

"I will see him to-morrow."

"He has left Haxteth."

Mr. Kays checked the words that were on his lips, but not the expression of contempt on his

face. There were a few moments' silence, and then Mr. Kays said—

"I fear this is a hard blow for you, Emmeline, a hard blow."

"It is an incident which I hope to go through with a proper dignity, and without alluding to it again. You will tell Anna and the others."

"Yes, if you wish it."

"I do. Let it be before I come down to-morrow morning. And would you ask them not to mention Mr. Gold's name, nor allude to the engagement in any way before me; I dislike condolences."

"Of course. I will give the strictest orders."

"I think it would be enough just to ask them. Thank you. I shall not speak of the subject again. Good night, James."

Next day and the day after Aunt Emmeline maintained her usual habits, talk, and manner. She was not aggressively cheerful, but she showed not the faintest sign of sorrow or depression.

"She's got over it quickly enough," said Walter to his father.

"It seems so," said Mr. Kays.

But within the week the change began, and week after week, and month after month it went on—a gradual decline into a dull melancholia. By December she had given up her work at St. Augustine's, and never attended a church service—her health was her excuse. She answered if

one of them spoke to her, but it was clear that she preferred to be left alone. Her appetite had gone, and late at night and into the early mornings there was a light in her room. She would sit for hours, staring into the fire, doing nothing. She neither read nor worked. Good-hearted Anna watched the strain with distress; she recalled their numerous little quarrels, and was sorry for all of them. One day she went to her aunt and began bluntly—

“You know I said that I was Miss Kays, and you were Miss Emmeline Kays.”

“Yes,” said Aunt Emmeline, speaking as one awakened out of sleep.

“Well, I find it was wrong. At least I’m going to alter it. You are the elder, and you are Miss Kays. And I’m going to have all my letters addressed Miss Anna Kays.”

Aunt Emmeline thanked her solemnly; she had not a very clear idea of what Anna was talking about; it was one of the ingratiating little kindnesses that did no good, she supposed.

Once or twice she seemed to make an effort. She came down smiling to breakfast, talked rapidly, professed a tremendous appetite. She gave her programme for the day, a good sharp walk, an hour or two at her embroidery frame, and—yes—she must really go and visit some of her poor people. Christmas was near—they would be expecting her.

But the flame died down almost instantly;

the programme for the day was never carried out. Before noon she had fallen back into her state of apathy.

Mr. Kays was very anxious about his sister. She obstinately refused to see a doctor.

"I am not seriously ill," she said. "I am not feeling very strong at present, and for that reason I do not go out much. But there is nothing to require a doctor."

"You sit up till all hours of the night. You don't eat. You've grown very much thinner. If you would let a doctor see you, and give you a tonic——"

"I have never been in the habit of calling in a doctor for every trifle, and if you bring one here I shall certainly refuse to see him. To-day I feel much better."

That was her constant plea, whenever she was urged to have advice, that she was feeling better—stronger than she had felt for days.

Her only interest seemed to be in Lindley. She had always been kind to the boy, and now she showed him marked favour. She liked to have him in her sitting-room with her.

"Bring your work here in the evening," she said. "You can have my writing-table. That will be quieter and pleasanter for you than working in the dining-room."

At first Lindley was delighted with the high privilege. He sat at the table, and his aunt sat in one of the easy-chairs with her back to him.

There was always a book on the reading-desk before her, and the pages were never turned. She rarely spoke. Lindley would hear nothing but the flap of the pages of his big dictionary as he turned them over, or the quick-ticking clock on the mantel-piece furiously fussing out the time. Then suddenly Aunt Emmeline would speak, and Lindley would jump. Yet it would only be some question, not in itself terrifying, the thing that had floated up on her troubled sea of thought. What degree did Mr. Doran take? Had Lindley managed to sell his butterfly-collecting apparatus yet? Was it Latin he was working at? Would he like to be a doctor?

"But I must not interrupt your work," she always said, as soon as he had answered her.

And then one night, just before the end of term, Aunt Emmeline frightened Lindley badly. It was an indefinite horror; he could hardly explain why it gripped him so. But it was urgently necessary to tell somebody, and he thought it best to tell his father.

By getting up earlier than usual next morning, Lindley managed to find his father alone before breakfast.

"I want to tell you something, father. Did you know that Aunt Emmeline talks?"

"Of course she does. What do you mean?"

"Not like ordinary talking to people who are there."

"You mean that she talks to herself? Well,

persons who are much alone do sometimes form that habit."

"Not quite that. It was like this. I was working in her room last night as usual, and I heard a whisper. It wasn't to me; she'd got her back turned to me and was looking at the sofa, where, of course, there was nobody. She went on and on, and the whisper got louder and louder, till it was like ordinary talk."

"Do you remember what she said?"

"Yes; she said, 'Of course, I know now that you never wrote the letter. But it took me in completely. There cannot be a doubt that you have your enemies.' And there was a lot more."

"Can you remember any more?"

"She said that she had got her enemies too, and that if she went two steps down the street she was followed and watched. The rest was about dress. She flung her head back and laughed. After a time she stopped talking. She was asleep when the gong went for supper; I had to waken her."

"And you let a little thing like that frighten you?"

"I did rather," Lindley admitted.

"It's nothing at all—nothing. We've all got queer ways of some kind or another."

"Ought I to have told you?"

"Certainly, quite right there. You did not know that it might not be something serious."

Mr. Kays fetched the doctor directly after

breakfast, without consulting his sister. It was not, he thought, a case for punctiliousness.

"Dr. Henner's come to have a talk with you," he said, as he opened her sitting-room door. "Simply to reassure me, you know."

"I fear I'm an intruder," said the young doctor, smiling, "but your brother is naturally a nervous man. If you could spare me a minute or two——"

"Charmed," said Aunt Emmeline. "But I fear it is a waste of time for you."

"Well, doctor, I'll see you later," said Mr. Kays, backing out of the room, and pleased that this surprise visit had been taken so well.

The doctor remained with Aunt Emmeline for nearly an hour. He saw Mr. Kays in the dining-room afterwards.

"It is a mental case," said Dr. Henner. "She has been playing the normal woman while I've been with her, and I've not been able to get at much. So far as I can tell, there is melancholia, and it seems, from what you tell me, that there are delusions. But I could find no trace of delusion just now. I look on it as a serious case, and I think she should see a specialist. Get her up to London, and let her see Davney Brown."

"She should go at once?"

"I think so; she should certainly leave Haxteth at once, and she should not return for some time to come. She needs to be under observation. Does she know anything of the medical



world? Would she know what Sir Davney's line is?"

"Oh no! I doubt even if she knows his name."

"Well, I wouldn't let her know that he's a mental specialist. You'd better not tell her it's a mental case at all. Tell her that she is much run down—she is. I'll send her something to help her appetite; it won't do any harm."

The doctor had several further questions to put to Mr. Kays, and a few details to arrange.

"You think she will recover?"

"I hope so; you see, it is not quite certain that she has delusions at all. She may merely have imagined a scene and acted it, as it were, knowing that it was imaginary. But, of course, I don't like her saying that she was watched and followed; there are several points I don't like. We must hear what Davney Brown says, and hope for the best."

Dr. Henner went off to telegraph to Sir Davney for an appointment, and afterwards to attend a plain, straightforward case of scarlet fever. He was a young general practitioner, had no experience of mentals, and did not like them.

"Well," said Mr. Kays cheerfully to his sister, "the doctor says you are very much run down, and we are to pack you off at once. You'll go up to London to-morrow, and see Sir Davney Brown the day after; then he will probably

send you off to the sea, but we must hear what he says."

To his surprise, Emmeline made no objection whatever. She seemed in better spirits than usual. She said that the doctor seemed a most pleasant young man.

"And since you and he have made up your minds that I am ill, I suppose I must do my best to act up to it."

On one point she was inclined to be obstinate. She wished to travel alone; Mr. Kays wished to go with her, but she would not go—that was all about it. Finally, she agreed to let Walter accompany her. There was something in her face that Mr. Kays did not like; he hardly knew what it was at the time; later he remembered it as an expression of furtive cunning.

Late that evening a servant saw her coming from Lindley's room; she was coming stealthily like a cat. There was a shawl over her arm, and she seemed to be holding something under the shawl. When she saw the servant she straightened herself up, stopped and spoke. She had been to say good night to Master Lindley, but he was asleep; she had been careful not to wake him. The servant thought it queer.

Next Sunday, after the early prayer-meeting, as Mr. Kays and his family were at breakfast, a telegram was brought to him. It was from Walter in London, and ran:—"The worst has happened; come at once." Mr. Kays told Anna

and Lindley he feared Aunt Emmeline was worse. He did not show them the telegram, and, for the only time in his life, he travelled on Sunday. He expected to find his sister a raving madwoman.

He found her dead. She had poisoned herself with cyanide of potassium on Saturday night, in her room at the hotel. She left a scrap of paper on the dressing-table, on which she had written:—"Never let Lindley know that I got the stuff from him. I had no choice. It was the only thing to do."

## CHAPTER X

### THE WILL

AT the inquest, at which Dr. Henner attended to give evidence, the usual and only possible verdict was returned. Mr. Kays and Walter alone attended the funeral in a London cemetery. Anna and Lindley were told that Aunt Emmeline was dead, but it was years afterwards that they learnt that she had taken her life. There was nothing very sensational in the case, and the public was interested in a great murder trial; few of the London papers reported the inquest, and these gave it but a brief notice, and spelled the name Hays. Mr. Kays paid to have that mistake made, and Haxteth omitted.

Haxteth had never known very much of the private life of the Kays family. Between the people who would not know them, and the people whom they would not know, they were left very much alone. Only a few knew Mr. Kays well enough to condole, and to add in a hushed and confidential voice—"And—er—what was it?"

"She'd been ailing for months; Dr. Henner

was attending her. He had sent her to London to see a specialist."

The inquirer would imagine something of an internal character, and from motives of delicacy forbear to question further.

"But nothing could be done?"

"Nothing."

Mrs. Frampton, who was fond of knowing things, went up to Dr. Henner, and said point-blank, "What did Miss Kays die of?"

Dr. Henner raised his eyebrows. "I am sorry to seem disobliging, Mrs. Frampton, but our rules are very strict, you know."

"Oh, I see—professional etiquette. What a fuss!" But she went home and told her husband that she intended to have Henner in future, because he looked clever and he didn't talk. And she did. She also said that as far as she could gather Miss Kays had died of cancer; she had gone to London for the operation, but it was too late.

It was just a case where it only needed a reasonable lie. Soon the interested portion of Haxteth had decided that Miss Kays had died of cancer. "A martyr to it for years," said the sympathetic. The report was brought to Mr. Kays; he appeared to shuffle; he did not contradict it. He would sooner have been hanged than have told, under any circumstance whatever, a literal absolute lie, but he was a past-master in the art of deceiving people without telling the literal

absolute lie ; he was not bound to let the busy-bodies have it all their own way. There were, in fact, many occasions when there was no necessity to tell a lie ; but there was every necessity to suppress the facts. Mary Camp always believed that Miss Kays had died of cancer ; and it took a load off her conscience.

Dear Theo—she had come to like him—had just got his chaplaincy, and had left England with his wife. They heard of Emmeline's death from Mary. "So it was all for the best," her letter ended.

Lindley was sorry for his aunt's death, because she had been kind to him, and because it was right to be sorry. But he was more perplexed and frightened than sorry. So this was death ; suddenly some one was not seen any more ; and the rest wore black and opened the dead person's secret drawers, and jingled her keys, and read letters and burned them, and tidied up. He could not picture her in his own mind in hell or heaven, as from numberless teachings and book-illustrations he imagined them. But his conviction was strong that she knew what was going on, and was capable of anger. He also believed that she could speak, but it was difficult for her to speak ; the voice would be squeaky and jerky. He had a private terror of hearing it come suddenly out of a dark corner of a room in which he was alone. He believed that she might be anywhere, but that she had no choice as to where she was to be. There were powers driving her as a wind drives

a dead leaf. There was a risk always in opening the door of a dark room ; she might fall out on him with arms waving and her hair over her face, and her big black cloak would wrap all round him. Then he would die and go to hell.

These thoughts would come to him when his mind was astray and dreaming at a church service. When he should have been praying for our bishops and curates, and all congregations committed to their charge, he was imploring God fervently to keep Aunt Emmeline away from him, and promising in return to do much better at school. He could think of nothing else to promise ; it was what his earthly father was always worrying him about. Not to a soul would he breathe one word of his torturing terrors. He suspected them of being wicked, and he was quite sure that he would be accused of cowardice. He had been accused of cowardice once or twice, and it had the same effect on him as his thrashing from the headmaster ; the feeling that it was unendurable, and that he would kill himself at once.

The gloom hung heavily on the house. Mr. Kays lengthened the morning and evening prayers, and attendance at a Wednesday evening service became compulsory. He felt that in the suicide of his sister God had punished him. He had failed to win her from ritualistic errors ; it might be that he himself had been wanting in fervour, that he had been too slack in the

religious education of his children. He grew more severe. Laughter and amusements were discouraged. Work and religion; religion and work—all else displeased him. Lindley's happiest time used to be when he found his sister Anna alone. She was courageous and independent, capable even of telling her father, with respect, that on some points she did not agree with him. She cheered Lindley up, and told him this kind of thing could not last.

Suddenly Lindley found that he was held in marked disfavour. Whatever he did it displeased his father. Walter avoided speaking to him, or spoke with a kind of savage contempt; as it will be seen, at this time he hated Lindley.

"Do you know what's the matter?" Lindley asked Anna.

"Not quite. I think it's something about Aunt Emmeline's will. I heard them talking the other night; they both seemed angry about it."

"I don't know anything about the will. I swear I have been doing the very best I can, and it's all no good. Father and Walter are always down on me. Every day and all day it's the same. I hate this damned life! I hate it! I wish they'd kill me and finish with it."

"Lindley!" It was his father calling him. "Go down to my office; I wish to speak to you." His father joined him there. "Sit down," he said, "and don't fidget with your feet; you know that I dislike it. The cupboard in your



room has been cleaned out, and that poison bottle of yours has got broken. It had to be destroyed—done away with."

He got through these sentences rapidly; it was necessary, in obedience to Emmeline's last injunctions, to account for the cyanide bottle.

"It doesn't matter a bit," said Lindley. "I've given up that kind of thing, you know."

"Very well. There is a more important matter that I have to speak about. I have to tell you Aunt Emmeline by will has left her money, which, as at present invested, yields about two hundred and twenty pounds a year, in trust to you. The trustees named are Mr. Benson, her solicitor, Mr. Price, his partner, and myself. I was never consulted, but I have consented to act."

All this was Greek to Lindley.

"It is specified that you are to leave the Grammar School immediately, and to go to a public school. From there you are to go to Oxford or Cambridge, as I personally may decide. While you are at the University the trustees are empowered to exceed the two hundred and twenty pounds a year; in fact, it is directed that while in residence at the University you are to receive three hundred pounds a year. The instructions to the trustees are very full—perhaps unnecessarily full. You understand what I am saying to you?"

"I don't think I do quite, father. Well, what is it I've done wrong?"

"Nothing. At least nothing that we're talking about now."

"I didn't know," said downcast Lindley, with wholly unconscious satire. "You said you wanted to speak to me, you know."

Mr. Kays looked at his son narrowly. The boy did not look well. Moreover, he was obviously in earnest. Mr. Kays had a twinge of conscience. He adopted his rare and lighter manner.

"Come, come, it's not quite as bad as all that, Lindley. Of course, all little boys need correction now and again."

Lindley stared pensively at the pattern of the linoleum.

"If you always talked like that, father, I don't know that I should mind the actual punishments much. It's—well, it's rather beastly feeling everybody hates you—except Anna, of course."

"Nobody hates you. It's absurd; in fact, it's wicked to talk like that. However it may seem to you, I have only thought of your good—of your soul's good especially."

And the tragedy of it was that this was absolutely true. This man who had crushed Lindley's soul, who had given him the idea that God was a tradesman in eternal bliss, and, moreover, a dishonest tradesman with an eccentric passion for getting little boys into pinewood pews to hear a chinless curate say that he "once knew a little gee-ur!"—this same man had really

and honestly done it all for Lindley's soul's good especially.

(Long afterwards Lindley recognized this, and had never a hard thought of his father.)

"And now about this will," said Mr. Kays, cheerfully. "I'll try and explain it, and you must ask me anything you like."

Gradually Lindley grasped at the facts. He was to go away to school. (He was thankful for that.) He would afterwards go to a University. It was all to be paid for out of Aunt Emmeline's money, in accordance with her directions. His father and Mr. Benson and Mr. Price would take care of the money, and pay it out as it was wanted. When he was twenty-one he would have the control of the money himself.

"In fact, Lindley, you are being given a chance in life that I never had, nor your elder brother either. I must tell you that this disposition of her money by Aunt Emmeline was totally unexpected by Walter and myself. It seems to me to be an unjust will, and I fear that Walter bitterly resents it. He is older than you are, he always showed Aunt Emmeline every consideration, and he sees no reason why you should have been favoured in this way. Neither he nor I expect much from this scheme to take you out of the class to which you belong. I fear you are too idle and too changeable to make any real use of the advantages given you. As to what I myself had proper reason to expect

from your aunt, I will say nothing. I will only repeat that the will is unjust and unwise; in fact, I cannot believe that your poor aunt was quite herself when she made it."

"It's not my fault," said Lindley. "I didn't know anything about it. I don't want to take everything, especially if you and Walter think I ought not. Let's divide it."

"Impossible. I could, if I liked, render her scheme inoperative, and prevent the money from coming to you. But in that alternative the money is left out of the family altogether, and goes to a cause of which I most strongly disapprove. No, I do not blame you, and I respect the dead; but it is my duty to tell you that this is an unjust will, and I tell you so because it is also my duty to repair the injustice. I have altered my own will in consequence, and at my death you will have little or nothing to expect. My own property will be divided between Walter and Anna."

"I'm glad of that," said Lindley. "If you tell Walter that, perhaps he'll stop—I mean there won't be so much to be angry about. Anna wouldn't mind, anyhow. And it's not my fault, is it?"

"No, it is not. I have said so to Walter. Now run away and think very seriously of this new kind of life that is coming to you; remember that it has responsibilities as well as advantages, and that one day you will have to

account for the talent that has been entrusted to you. And pray, my boy, for guidance, and that you may be kept from temptation."

Lindley went back to Anna and talked it over with her; she rejoiced at his good fortune, but was sorry that he would now be so much away from her.

"It's just possible I may go away too," she said, wrinkling her pretty forehead. "We'll see how things go on."

After prayers that night Mr. Kays said, "I think, Walter, I will smoke a cigar before going to bed. I have not smoked at all these last few weeks, and I believe it would be good for me. Perhaps you would join me. Anna, you might get out the whisky and some soda-water."

When Anna and Lindley had gone to bed, father and son talked over the will together.

"If I'm to say what I think," said Walter, "I think poor Aunt Emmeline was not in her right mind when she made that will, and that it might be upset. It was made the day after she'd received that great shock, the breaking-off of her engagement. I didn't say much, but she struck me as very queer. We know from Lindley that she afterwards had delusions. And we know how she died. It is a mad will. Lindley, with his character, will do no good with the money; it will be the ruin of him. He wants careful looking after. At Cambridge or Oxford he will be independent—and as lazy as he likes—and

he'll learn nothing except to despise the rest of us."

"I hope not. I think you're too hard on Lindley. She knew Forth had recommended that Lindley should be sent to a University, and mentioned it to Benson and Price. They are convinced that she was perfectly sane when she made the will, and they do not think it is an unreasonable will. They say it was natural that she should have a favourite nephew; and that, as he showed particular promise, she should give him every chance. I do not think myself that we could upset the will, and it would mean a lot of scandal about the death. I could not hear of it. Do you think it is pleasant for me to be told that either I shall bring up my own son in a way that some other person directs, or that this family money shall go out of the family, and go to a society which practically exists for Romanizing the Church of England? No. I am worse treated than you are, Walter. The injustice to you will be repaired one day."

"Yes, I know that, father."

They sat in silence for a few moments, and then talked of business matters till their cigars were finished.

Upstairs, Lindley lay awake still, excited about the future, and feeling a little like the prisoner who sees the gates open for him.



## BOOK II





## CHAPTER I

### SCHOOL

SO Lindley went into a new world—a world where the ideals, the beliefs, the mode of life, the manners were all different. He was young and adaptive, and, with very few blunders, managed to fit himself to the life of a public school.

It seemed to him at first that some of the boys were absolute devils, delighting in insolent cruelty ; but before the end of a term he found that it was not very difficult for him to manage these devils, and even to change their hostility into admiration. He liked popularity, and took immense trouble to win good opinions that his sober judgment did not really value. At cricket and football he was never of the least use, and both games bored and annoyed him ; but he won all possible swimming prizes, was considered an expert in the gymnasium, and (this was much to the point) was a dangerously good boxer. He had some eccentricities which amused other boys, and gave them something funny to talk about. They tended towards his popularity, and he was

not guiltless of occasionally assuming an eccentricity intentionally. He was, for instance, as a rule, quite well-behaved, and not rebellious under authority, but every now and then he would permit himself some monumental piece of impertinence towards a master. If he executed this neatly and quietly and with effect, and if it became the subject of talk in the school-house, he bore with equanimity the severe punishments which invariably followed. His masters were rather puzzled about him. At times he seemed brilliant and full of promise. At other times they came up against the densest stupidity. At all times he was very lazy.

Before a year was over Lindley Kays noted, without puzzling much to find the reasons, that he loved school, and that he hated his home more and more. He particularly detested his brother Walter. Walter still resented bitterly the unmerited favour that had been shown to Lindley. He was fond of telling Lindley that he supposed that by now he would be too proud to know him. He supposed he ought to touch his hat to Lindley when they met. There was much more of this kind of satire, which nauseated, but did not wound. Lindley permitted himself in revenge a few words on the subject of Walter's personal appearance. They were well-chosen words, distinctly rude and long-remembered. When Lindley was home for the holidays the brothers kept apart as much as possible. Lindley was

glad when one Easter he was unable to go home. Walter's scarlet-fever and the fear of infection kept Lindley back at the school-house. Two other boys, whose parents in India, were also at the school-house for the holidays. There was no work to do, and but little supervision. Mr. Kays, firm in his belief that it must be a great deprivation to Lindley not to come home for the holidays, had been particularly generous in the matter of pocket-money. Lindley thought of various mad things to do, and did them. He looked back upon this period afterwards as quite one of the happy times of life.

In spite of his idleness he found his way in due course up into the sixth. He was made a prefect now, and had a study to himself. So far religion had provided either the active torture or the passive boredom of his life. Now he read Greek Testament with the headmaster, studied readings, heard comments and explanations. But Lindley could not accept the explanations. He found that St. Paul quoted from the Old Testament inaccurately, and even dishonestly, and that he was to regard the result as inspired work, written by the hand of God. A little volume of Shelley's prose writings fell into his hands, and the somewhat crude diatribes impressed him. "Eleven millions of men, women, and children, have been killed in battle, butchered in their sleep, burned to death at public festivals of sacrifice, poisoned, tortured,



assassinated, and pillaged in the spirit of the Religion of Peace, and for the glory of the most merciful God"—he would quote that passage. But he quoted with discretion; he would have been regarded as an outcast by many of the boys had they discovered that he did not believe. But there were one or two who agreed with him on the futility of attempting to excuse the most abominable treachery and cruelty by the plea that we must not judge the morality of a past age by the standard of our own time. At the time of his confirmation he was an atheist by day, and sometimes an ardent and frightened worshipper by night. He said nothing of all this at home. Walter he considered as too big a fool to understand, and he had too much regard for Anna and his father to wish to distress them. So in the holidays he went through the old religious mill every Sunday as usual, only it had lost its power to bruise him.

In the year before he left school two important changes took place at his home. The first was the marriage of Walter to a domestic servant, a girl of florid beauty, unpleasant, cunning and naturally vulgar heart. Mr. Kays, firm in his belief that we are all equal in the sight of God, did his best to accept the situation; he concealed as far as possible, even from himself, the fact that he loathed his new daughter, and thought that Walter was behaving like an obstinate ass. Anna was as good-natured as ever, but not to

the point of foolishness. The idea had occurred to her before that a day would be likely to come when she would wish to leave home, and she had her independence already prepared. She was qualified to act as a teacher of cookery, a subject in which she was deeply interested. She now put it to her father that Henrietta, Walter's wife, would expect to be mistress in the house, and that it was better she should go. A post had been offered her; it was fairly well paid, and she would enjoy the work. Mr. Kays somewhat reluctantly consented.

"These are great changes," he said. "The house will no longer be the same. I could almost wish that Walter had decided to take a small house for himself; but the question of expense comes in, of course, as well as the nearness to the business. He and you will be better off when I'm gone, and I dare say, I shall not keep you long. Meantime I think you're right. I should have liked you to stop, but I can see that it wouldn't work."

Anna presented silver salt-cellars, remained for the wedding ceremony, and even went so far as to salute Henrietta's blushing cheek with a sisterly kiss in the vestry afterwards. But a few days afterwards Anna left home. Lindley generally knew within a few moments of seeing anybody whether he was going to like them or not. He detested Henrietta on sight. After a brief honeymoon in some horrible watering-place,

Walter brought back his wife to live with him at his father's house in the High Street. Mrs. Walter Kays took up the housekeeping which Anna had now given over, and did it badly enough. Like all servants who become mistresses, she was tyrannical and unreasonable.

The next event was the death of Mr. Kays, which occurred rather suddenly in the spring, a few months after his son's marriage. Lindley was telegraphed for from school, and went through the next few days and attended the funeral in a kind of dream, sometimes reproaching himself that he was not more sorry, sometimes thinking that on the whole this was not much of a world, and his father was well out of it. Walter's vehement grief rather disgusted Lindley, though he reproached himself that he had so little sympathy and feeling as to be disgusted. But months later, while Walter was cheerfully whistling over his business and planning the alterations that he would make now that he could at last get his own way, Lindley was thinking of his father and puzzling over the eternal problem. His father left the value of a mourning ring to Lindley, the remainder of his property to be divided equally between Walter and Anna. When the division had taken place, Anna came up to London and took a small flat there. Once or twice Anna and Lindley spent their holidays together in Paris.

Lindley lost many things and forgot many

things. Amongst others he lost the leather case with Sonya's letter in it, but he never forgot Sonya. He wondered what she would look like now—if they would ever meet again, and if she would remember him.

This did not prevent him at the age of eighteen from meeting clandestinely the daughter of a dissenting minister living at a village near the school, and from various other ignoble flirtations. Ignoble was the word he chose for them himself at times. His conscience, always a nuisance to him, would tell him that he did not love the daughter of the dissenting minister, and that there was nothing but the attraction of a pretty face and a little flattery to his own vanity. It was not too serious an affair, and it ended without catastrophe when he left for Cambridge.

It was considered likely that he would take a good scholarship, and not impossible that it would be very good. Yet it was not any great surprise when he failed three or four times in succession. He had always been erratic. Hardly any mistake was quite impossible for him. To keep his hand in he tried at one of the smaller colleges, St. Cecilia's, though he had no intention of going there. Most of the papers that he sent in were wretched, but in an unseen paper he had rendered a passage of Propertius neatly and prettily into English verse, and his Latin prose was really a brilliant piece of work. A scholarship was awarded him, and he hesitated. He went round

the old court of St. Cecilia's and was charmed with it. Price, one of the trustees under his aunt's will, had been a Cecilian. He decided to accept his lot, and entered at St. Cecilia's.

It is in his second long vacation and in his room in the old court of St. Cecilia's that we resume his history.



## CHAPTER II

### EXTREME YOUTH

MARCUS OWEN, a somewhat square and stolid man, believed to have great chances in the Mathematical Tripos, had been dining in Lindley's rooms, and had reached the point when Lindley produced the cigars. The cigar-box had a polished surface. The cigars themselves were of abnormal size, and each was wrapped separately in silver foil. They bore an air of great expense.

"What do you pay for these penny whiffs?" said Owen, as he leisurely undressed one of the cigars.

"It ain't so much a question of what I pay for them as what I owe for them. You know the rule—if you can't pay for what you've had, you've got to buy something else to keep the beggars quiet. As a matter of sober fact, I believe I owe five pounds ten shillings for that "box."

"Well," said Marcus, "when they've got their overcoats and sashes off they are not an absolutely impossible smoke."

"Thanks awfully," said Lindley.

"But," Marcus continued, "it's my duty while I smoke this to tell you that you are an extravagant, lazy, good-for-nothing aristocrat, and will come to a bad end."

Lindley laughed. He had grown into a tall young man, well set up, and not ill-looking, but for his almost habitual expression of grim discontent. It vanished when anything amused him.

"As to the aristocrat," he said, "I think I've told you my noble pedigree before. As for my way of living, all the early part of my life was stunted, and so now I am spreading myself. I don't admit the laziness at all."

"Don't you, my son? Well, what have you done to-day?"

"To start with, I read the sacred lessons in the holy chapel, as I believe you heard, and I only hope that the impressive and beautiful way in which I read them made some effect on your hardened heart. Coming out of chapel the dean asked me why it was that when the lesson began at verse eight, and had a clear run without a check to verse seventy-two, I always made the blunder of beginning at verse one and shutting off steam at verse eight."

"And those were his exact words?"

"Words to that effect. The dear old man went on to say that he knew the reading of lessons in chapel was something of an ordeal to some men, and that it made them nervous, and this would account for the mistakes, but

that I must exercise great care in future. I'll say this for the good old man, that if he ever does rag you about anything he always finds you a better lie by way of excuse than you could have thought of yourself."

"Did you hear what he said to Astley the other day?"

"I don't think so. Go ahead."

"Astley was getting off chapel on the line of conscientious scruples. The dean sent for him, and they got up to their necks in a theological discussion. Finally, Astley played what he considered to be the ace of trumps by asking what would become of the souls of those who died without ever having heard of Christianity? The dean walked up and down his carpet for a moment, thinking it over. 'Well, Mr. Astley,' he said, 'I am thankful to say that I am not he who will have to settle these things.' That's rather sweet, I think."

"Yes," said Lindley, "the spectacle of the Dean of St. Cecilia's offering up humble and hearty thanks that he is not the Almighty is far from unpleasing."

"But to come back to the point—what work did you do this morning?"

"Well," Lindley said, "after chapel I completed a toilet which had in its original form been, by the necessities of the case, somewhat abbreviated. Then I went round to breakfast with Welgrave. Know him? Welgrave, of King's."

"No. Another rotter, like yourself, I suppose?"

"Another earnest seeker after truth. After breakfast we talked over the universe and one or two other things, and then I got a novel of his and read on the backs. And the novel was such consummate rot that I fell asleep, just at the point when I should normally have been going to my coach. This afternoon Welgrave and I went up to Byron's and bathed. That's pretty strenuous exercise for a hot afternoon. A lazy man wouldn't have done it. Then I read Mallock's 'New Republic,' which is an everlasting joy, and then Marcus Owen, supposed by himself to be a future Senior Wrangler, came in and shared my modest repast, and made offensive remarks about me and my cigars and everything that is mine."

"It's all very well to put it that way," said Marcus Owen; "but, speaking seriously, you're making an awful fool of yourself, and it's a pity you can't be brought to see it. You've got a certain amount of untamed, run-to-seed cleverness, and you might do something with it, but you won't. You got a first in your first Mays and a second in your second Mays."

"True," said Lindley, "and I shall get a third in my Tripos, and all will end happily."

"I believe you might get a first even now, if you'd only set to and do some work. Then what are you going to do with yourself

afterwards? What's your profession going to be?"

"Damned if I know," said Lindley.

"I thought not. You and your set sit and gas about the hereafter and sex problems and the New Democracy and other pleasant subjects about which you know nothing, and probably never will know anything, and you let your practical chances slide. Take Haming, for instance; he's the son of a poor parson who, you may bet, makes some sacrifice to send him here. You've made him nearly as extravagant and idle as yourself, and he hasn't got your abilities. He's over head in debt, and he'll probably come no end of a cropper, and he may thank you for it."

"And," said Lindley, "as I observed in chapel this morning, here endeth the first lesson. Look here, Marcus, there is a certain amount of truth in what you say; but what can I do about Haming? I have told him much the same kind of thing that you've told me, but I'm not his nursemaid. I can't be always looking after him."

"Advice against extravagance and laziness wouldn't have much weight coming from you in any case."

"I suppose not. When I wish to be regarded as a stained-glass saint I'll say so. As for myself and my own future, what's the use of making definite plans? I suppose, even after I've paid my debts, I shall have enough to live

on in a way, as long as an all-merciful Providence keeps me from the heinous sin of matrimony. I don't quite know where my tastes and abilities lie. I'd like to write, of course, but I don't know how to start. Then there's another point—what does it all matter? What can it all matter? We are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and forgotten the day after. Get what fun you can while it lasts—that's the right philosophy."

Marcus rose to his full height, which was considerable, stretched himself, and surveyed Lindley with good-humoured contempt.

"Don't you ever get sick of the cynicism of extreme youth?" he asked.

"It's not that. When I was kept in strictly at home and made to work hard and pray hard and live lowly, I thought I wanted a whole lot of things, and principally the exact opposite of what I'd got. Well, I've escaped; I've got what I wanted. If I'd ever thought as a boy that my present way of life would ever have been possible to me, I should have gone mad with joy. And now it's a solemn fact the whole thing has lost its savour. One drinks too much, smokes too much, spends too much, and makes love on every possible opportunity, and there's nothing in it, and if I don't give it up and turn to really solid work it's because I can't see that there is anything in that either. What do our little academic distinctions matter when we get out in the world? Where

are the Senior Wranglers and Senior Classics of yesterday? A chap will come up and tell me that Smith is going to be tried at full-back, or that fifty clerks have gone to glory in a suburban railway smash, just as if the two things were of equal importance. No, I'm wrong; he'll probably forget to mention the clerks at all, and, worst of all, I'm not at all certain that the two things are not of equal importance, or, rather, of no importance at all."

"Is this the bad influence of Fitzgerald's Omar on the unformed intelligence, or is it merely indigestion? It's skittles, anyhow. You speak from inexperience. Once you get mixed up in the serious affairs of life, you won't ask yourself whether they matter, and you won't have much patience with the people who tell you they don't. This superior and pessimistic attitude means pretty nearly always the same thing—ignorance and laziness trying to flatter and excuse themselves."

"No, I'm not flattering myself," said Lindley. "You believe that you take a high mathematical degree, and will end as a happy married house-master in a public school, and it'll quite satisfy you. I haven't got the qualities for anything like so distinguished a career, and even if I had, it would not satisfy me in the least. I am greedy, I want more, I want to do something of my own, something special. I am absolutely convinced that I never shall. What you're pleased to call

my youthful pessimism is simply the disgust of mediocrity at beholding its own face in the glass."

"Well," said Marcus, "I've no more time for this nicely phrased insanity. I must be off to my toil. And if you'd do the same, and do it regularly, you would change your view of life."

When Marcus had gone, Lindley paced the room with his hands in his pockets. He had the uncomfortable feeling that Marcus was the better man—a man who might go much further than his present ambitions. Suppose that, after all, it were best to take short views of life and do the thing that came to hand? He sat down at his writing-table, irresolute, and then rose and turned to his piano. He began to play Chopin from memory—a nocturne that he had heard first at a provincial ballad concert in his childhood. Halfway through it he stopped and rose impatiently. Here again was the same curse of mediocrity. He played well enough; with a few years of study and practice he might be up to professional form, but he would never be a great composer nor even a great pianist. A whistle underneath his window broke in on his thoughts. He walked to the window and leaned out. A rather drawling voice came up from the court below.

"Hullo! Are you alone?"

"That you, Jimmy? Yes, I'm alone and at work. Go thou and do likewise."



"That won't do. I heard the piano. You might come over to me for a bit."

"Not I! You can come up here if you like. I rather wanted to see you."

James Haming came up. He looked good-natured and weak. He wore his hair very short and his collars very high.

"Just been talking about you, Jimmy. Marcus considers you're going to the devil, and that I'm shoving behind, and I'm inclined to agree with him."

"What rot! Still, Marcus is a good old sort—a bit serious. What was that thing you were playing?"

"Nothing."

Jimmy took a cigar and stretched himself on the couch.

"It sounded to me rather decent. Do it again, won't you?"

Lindley went back to the piano. For a moment or two he amused himself with modulating from one key to another.

"That ain't it," called Jimmy from the couch.

Lindley once more began to play the nocturne, and this time he played it through to the end. A melody like a fragrance has clear associations. As he played, Lindley saw in the eye of memory the solicitor's wife breaking down over the pathos of a stupid ballad because her baby had died a short time before. He saw the look of fat approbation on his brother's face and his sister's

kindly and intelligent eyes. And lastly he saw the little girl whom everybody petted—the little girl with the gipsy beauty, who came towards him, looking as though she was going to speak. The music stopped.

“That ain’t bad, you know,” said Jimmy, who was heartily ashamed of a genuine love of music. Lindley made no answer. “Here, wake up,” Jimmy went on. “What the devil are you dreaming about?”

“Nothing,” said Lindley. He rose from the piano and yawned. “On the whole,” he said, “I think I rather wish I was dead.”

Haming laughed.

## CHAPTER III

### EMERGING

LINDLEY'S career at Cambridge ended very much as had been expected. He knew much less of classics when he went in for his Tripos than he had done when he first went up. On the other hand, he had more power of using his knowledge. In the examination itself, fortune was with him. He happened to have read several passages in the unseen papers, and had time to give his renderings a certain style. He just managed to squeeze into the second class. He had a certain amount of debts, but they did not trouble him. In a few months he would have entire control of the money which had been left him by his aunt, and then these could be wiped out. He had determined to live in London, and the question had been raised whether he should not join his sister Anna at her flat. He was fond of her, and it was for this reason that he was reluctant to accept this scheme. He knew that he wished to live in a way of which, in many respects, Anna would disapprove. She had shown some slight signs of emancipation; but

she still went to church twice every Sunday. He was afraid, too, that she would look upon his attempts at writing as little better than an excuse for laziness. It was probably a case where they would agree better if they lived separately.

Anna, of her own action, cut the knot. After a very brief engagement she married Hubert Garston, a partner in Garston and Co., a ship-building firm. Garston was a young man of smart appearance and sporting tastes, as good-humoured as Anna herself, modest and level-headed. Lindley had expected to dislike him. He somewhat resented the sudden change in his sister. Neither he nor anybody nor anything in the world, except Hubert, appeared to her to matter in the very least. But the two met, and Lindley was conquered. He admitted to Anna that he had been prejudiced, but that his judgment was now entirely favourable.

"You poor idiot!" said Anna without acrimony, but quite seriously.

The marriage took place in London, and Walter and his wife came up for it. Walter in a carefully chosen white satin necktie, varied between aggressive cordiality and stage fright. It seemed to Lindley curious and difficult to realize that this man should be his brother, and that, beyond their parentage, they should have nothing whatever in common between them. Henrietta, his wife, acting under advice, was very suppressed.

While Anna was away on her honeymoon, Lindley occupied her little flat. There were still two months to run before her tenancy of it ended. Lindley had some thoughts of taking it on altogether, but gave that up. There was a note of another individuality, and that a feminine individuality, about its colour and arrangements; he felt it almost as a restriction on his freedom. He wanted to be himself in his own place. The bookshelves surprised him a little. He had always regarded Anna as a creature of the simplest tastes, satisfied with household matters. That she should give lectures on cookery had seemed to him almost inevitable, if she were to lecture at all; but the bookcase in her flat showed him that she had a wider culture than he suspected. Cookery, he found, was an exact science; it appeared, moreover, that his sister read Heine in the original German, and Dante in the original Italian. Lindley, who knew no living languages but English and hotel French, respected this. He respected her, too, for not having told him about it. He himself felt that under similar circumstances he would have bragged. He saw himself, in a flash, writing a letter with this sentence in it: "Am reading Dante in the evenings now, translations really give one no idea."

Here for a month or two he decided to look about him and make up his mind. He had now attained his majority, and his business affairs

were in his own hands. He had to arrange for the payment of the Cambridge debts. He had also to find a way of life, and a place in which to live it. The debts he left over until he could have an opportunity of consulting with his brother-in-law. Benson and Price would have advised him, of course, but he was a little ashamed of letting that estimable firm know that he had exceeded an allowance that was really quite sufficient. As for his way of life, he meant to take up some special line of study. Now that work of this kind was no longer his duty, he could quite imagine that it might become one of his pleasures. The suggestions of Anna's bookshelves had been fruitful. He would write, too, for the magazines, if the magazines would have him, and he had ideas for a novel besides. He was conscious that he was not very precise in his own mind as to what he wished to study, or what he wished to write. So, too, with the rooms that he was going to take. Sometimes he saw them sombre and interesting in one of the old inns, but his next flash of imagination added an elaborately fitted bath-room, the electric light, and all modern improvements. "The trouble with me," said he to Haming, dolefully, one evening, "is that I want everything, more or less."

Haming had gone down in the world; he had left Cambridge without taking a degree, and it needed a prolonged struggle with the scholastic agents before he could even obtain the post of

undermost master in a small private school at Ealing. He was poor, and his credit was gone. He was embarked on a profession that offered no hope and no possibilities. He had to walk in procession with the boys to church on Sunday, was only permitted to smoke in the strictest seclusion after their bedtime, and was generally required to be an ensample of the godly life. It was some merit to him that he could take it smiling. On his rare evenings of liberty he would sometimes come up to town to see Lindley, and drink his whisky, and hear his complaints.

Lindley began to study London, and the more he studied the more he saw that it was without charm. The vulgarity of its rich and the suffering of its poor and the satisfaction of its middle classes seemed to him to be all equally depressing. He wrote one or two essays of a sociological nature on the subject, wherein he discovered several things that had been discovered before, and expressed them heavily, in phrases which did not need to be used again. He sent these off to an editor, enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope, of which the editor duly availed himself. When they came back he showed them to Haming, and Haming stumbled upon an acute observation. "I can read your letters all right," he said, "but I can't read this sort of rot." Lindley was annoyed, but he had the justice to reflect that there was a reason for this. He went on writing, and found to his surprise that it is practice which

gives originality. One's first tendencies are imitative.

Anna and her husband spent some time in London on their return from Paris. Anna's books and furniture were packed up and sent off, and Lindley achieved no greater feat of originality than to remove from her flat to another in the neighbourhood of the British Museum. His brother-in-law gave him good advice as to the realizing of certain investments, and his Cambridge debts were paid off. At Number 17, Selby Mansions, with his own books and his own furniture around him, he felt definitely at home. It did not always satisfy him. There were times when he felt that he should have taken a villa by an Italian lake, or a cottage in Devonshire. But he was less restless than he had been so far; he spent less time now on wandering about or making pleasures. He was delighted to find that those first cynical essays of his own disgusted him, and to feel quite sure that he could do better. One morning he found among the letters on his breakfast table, one which bore the stamped address of the *English Review*. He had sent an article there a few days before, a political squib of rather a fantastic character. It was obvious from its size that this envelope did not contain the article; possibly it was a letter of acceptance. He opened it and read as follows :—



"DEAR SIR,

"The editor desires me to say that if you should find it convenient to call here on Friday next, at eleven o'clock, he would be pleased to see you.

"Faithfully yours,

"F. R. SMITH, *Secretary.*"

Lindley was exultant. Here at last was a beginning. He wrote to Mr. Smith to say that he would call at the hour stated, and spent the rest of the day in dreams and speculations, his mind wandering from every other subject to imaginations of his future, now dreary visions of garrets and starvation, and now resplendent with all that fame and wealth could bestow.

He was at the office of the *English Review* at five minutes to eleven, dressed beyond reproach, and vaguely nervous. It was ten minutes past eleven before the editor could see him.

## CHAPTER IV

### DORAN

THE editorial room was filled with a haze of tobacco-smoke. A big man in a shabby tweed suit, with a pipe in one hand, stood with his back to the fire. He had grey hair and a face that indicated strength of individuality. He held out his hand to Lindley, with a smile.

"How do you do, Kays?" he said. "And I'll bet you don't remember me."

"Give me time," said Lindley. "I know the voice—no, it's no good, I've not got it."

"A long time ago, up at Haxteth, it was your misfortune to be compelled to learn a little Latin grammar, and it was my misfortune on one occasion to teach it to you."

"Then," said Lindley, "you were the greater sufferer. But I should have hardly thought that you could have been Mr. Lidgett. You must have changed very much."

"Lidgett? Oh, God forbid! Excuse me, but it's a bit of a shock for any one to be taken for Lidgett, who, by an all-merciful Providence has been spared that disgrace. No, I am not Lidgett,

neither am I Forth, your ingenious headmaster. My name's Doran. But, after all, why should you remember? You went away to a public school, and forgot all about us."

"No," said Lindley, "I remember now. You took the form I was in one day."

"I did, and I prophesied at the time that you might possibly take a scholarship one day. Some years ago I saw in the papers that you had fulfilled my prophesy, and thought about writing to congratulate you, but I can't write letters."

"I heard that you had left the Haxteth school, but I did not know that you wrote. I always supposed you had taken a headmastership somewhere."

"I am proud to say that I have none of the qualities that make a good headmaster. No, I always scribbled, even in the days when I was teaching. One thing led to another. Anyway, here I am, and here I have been for the last three years. However, to come to the subject of discussion——" He picked up Lindley's manuscript from a pile on the table. "So you do this kind of thing?" he said.

"It would be no good to deny it," said Lindley.

"Well, now, I wanted to ask you about that. (Sit down, won't you? You'll find some cigarettes in that box.) I was going to say, how are you doing this? Are you filling in the intervals of

some other profession? Are you depending on it for a livelihood? Is this an occasional freak, or do you suffer from a confirmed habit?"

"At present," said Lindley, "I am trying to learn to write. I am not actually dependent upon it; an aunt of mine left me some money—enough to live upon; but I have no other profession, and I should be very glad if I could make money by it in the end."

Doran turned over the pages of Lindley's manuscript meditatively.

"This is light," he said, "and spirited. You have a certain touch. It won't do for us, of course; but that needn't discourage you."

"I was afraid it wasn't good enough," said Lindley.

"It's not that exactly either," said Doran; "the writing is good enough, if that were all, but there's a want of judgment. You go too far; you imply things about public men of good character that you've really got no business to imply. It might have been effective in the time of the Regency, but it would not be effective now, except that it might make serious trouble for you. Then, again, you don't really know anything about politics. You've simply used the stock of the newspapers. You bring me no novelty, in fact or in comment. I must strongly advise you to give up political writing for the present, until your education has gone a little further. But I'll give you a book to review if



you like, and you can try your hand at a middle—you know, one of those social articles in the middle of the paper.”

“This is really most awfully kind of you,” said Lindley.

“Not at all,” said Doran. “I’m glad you mentioned it, because it gives me a chance to tell you never to expect any kindness from me at all in my present capacity. If your review is not well done, it won’t go in. If your middle isn’t brilliant, I shan’t take it. To act in any other way would be to act dishonestly. Now I’ve got to turn you out, because I’ve letters to finish before lunch, but I want to see you again. Look here, have you any engagement for to-night?”

“None. I have very few engagements.”

“Well, come and help me through a rather tiresome evening. I’ve got to speak at a debate at a woman’s club. We will dine together first—not at a woman’s club, but at the Granville. Seven o’clock, I’m afraid. It’s beastly early, but there’s this appalling debate afterwards. I was a fool to have let myself in for it. But Sarah Lockett—she’s the president—is a good sort, and she seemed keen about it. Or, if you like, come to dinner, and I’ll let you off the debate.”

“Not at all,” said Lindley. “I’ll have both the dinner and the debate, please. Thanks, very much.”

There were other things that he had wished

to say to Doran, but he now found himself shaking hands with him, and a moment later he was outside the door. Doran was a busy man, and had brought the art of dismissal to perfection.

## CHAPTER V

### SONYA

THE cab pulled up at the house of the Eliot Club, in Hanover Square. Doran regretfully abandoned his cigar, and the two men passed into the hall. A short and plump lady, in a black evening dress, rushed at Doran and shook him warmly by the hand. She was a woman of forty, of great vivacity, and with a curiously childish and happy-go-lucky manner about her.

"This is awfully good of you," she said impetuously; "and you're actually punctual. I ought to have asked you to have dined here first, but I forgot all about it, and the dinners here are rather crocky, anyhow. Oh, I say, who do you think is opposing you? It's Mrs. Wilson."

"Ah," said Doran, slowly. "And what is Mrs. Wilson like? Does she hurt?"

"Not a bit; but she tries. The figure of a sylph and the soul of a batter pudding."

"I have brought a friend of mine, to keep

me in countenance," said Doran. "This, Mrs. Lockett, is Mr. Kays."

"How do you do?" said Mrs. Lockett. "We are always so glad when men come to these debates. Are you interested?"

"I'm afraid," said Lindley, "that I don't even know the subject of the debate at present."

"Oh! Well, we're talking about ourselves—much as usual. We are a queer lot, some of us, but we are doing a deal of good, or we think we are. I am the president, and I'm about the queerest of the lot. They only made me president because otherwise a perfect cat would have got it. But come on in, won't you?"

There was a good deal of courteous applause as, followed by Lindley, the president and the editor of the *English Review* entered the room. The president took her place in the chair, with a low table in front of her. Doran and Lindley sat on her left, and on her right the secretary and Mrs. Wilson. Doran was hurriedly presented to Mrs. Wilson, and then the business of the evening began. It was purely formal business at first; a spectacled secretary read minutes, while Mrs. Wilson, a neat little woman with very yellow hair, glanced nervously over her notes. Lindley had time to look at the people gathered before him in the body of the room. They were nearly all women, and the few men present looked distinctly frightened and submissive. Some were in evening dress



and some were not, and the dress marked various shades of opinion. Lindley noted what he supposed was an ugly, short-haired boy in an excessively negligent attitude and a mouse-coloured velveteen smoking suit. As the boy changed his place, Lindley observed that it was not a boy, and wore a skirt. Later in the evening he asked who she was, and Sarah Lockett told him.

"We have to have that sort here, but it's pretty silly. Only the women who think men are pigs and should be abolished ever try to dress and to act exactly like them."

The president read out a carefully worded motion, briefly to the effect that London was wanting in civilization, and behind the times.

Doran began with the calm of a practised speaker, explaining the point of view he proposed to take. As he went on he grew more and more eager; for the moment he thought of nothing but making this pack of women see what he saw. He had his facts and figures ready, and no notes of any kind to aid his memory. The argument was clear and solid. Lindley recalled the lesson in Latin grammar that he had had from him many years before. He had been as vehement then. Doran concluded with a description of a possible London, and sat down perspiring. It had been well done, and was received with enthusiasm.

He awoke as much enthusiasm many times

and many years afterwards in the House of Commons, and the enthusiasm gave him no more satisfaction then than now. He had to do everything that was to be done as well as he could, whether he were teaching boys the *oratio obliqua*, or talking to a woman's club, or inflicting serious injury on the Government. He would have been miserable otherwise. But he had no respect for a popular verdict.

Mrs. Wilson was nervous, vindictive, and in great trouble with her notes. There were long pauses, except when she got on to some passage which she had committed by heart, and had not yet forgotten, and then she spoke too quickly. There were a few insignificant points, laboriously made. When she seemed to be in the middle of her speech she came to a sudden stop, smiled nervously, said that she thought that was all she had to say, and sat down in a very bad temper that she had not acquitted herself better. A few other speakers followed, at long intervals, and only after strenuous encouragement from the president. Their mediocrity surprised Lindley, for this was a club associated with woman's advance, with higher education, and with the establishment of her rights. But, after all, the desire to advance is a matter of temperament, and mediocrity is a matter of intellect, or the want of it.

Lindley's mind wandered. He did not notice at present the dearth of speakers and the



prolonged silence. Doran touched him on the arm.

"The president wants you to say something. Do, if you can."

Lindley had spoken frequently at his college debating society and at the Union. He was not nervous, and at Cambridge rather a high opinion had been formed of his abilities in this way. He had no conviction on the subject either way, and cared very little about it. But the opposition was having so much the worst of it that he rose to support them. He pleaded that the trouble was that London was far too civilized, and that a return to absolute barbarism would be very desirable. His speech was brilliant, easy, full of epigram, and obviously insincere. He ended inevitably with a quotation from Omar. He had amused this rather dull crowd, and they showed their gratitude.

There was a moment's pause, and then, right away at the further end of the room, Sonya Fielding stood up. And Lindley recognized her. Indeed, the face had changed very little; it still had something of the expression of a child. Its even tone suggested to him an old ivory, magically endued with life. Her features were slightly irregular, and of a type that Burne-Jones might have painted. Dressed in silver and grey she looked like a princess from some far-away country. She did not make a speech; she said quietly one or two things that had come into her

head. She did not believe in the modern pagan. If he had to go back to the days of Omar he would be very sorry. He wanted the licence of barbarism and the electric light of civilization, and he could not have both. London was bad enough, but—and here she grew earnest—that was no reason for going back. It had been worse, and it would be better.

“Everything gets better, if you only stick to it, and don’t give up hope.”

A girl sitting near her laughed, and Sonya smiled responsively. She had a fascinating smile.

“I don’t put these things very well,” she said, “but you know what I mean. To say that we had better go back to barbarism is to be like the sulky baby, who, when he is told that he mayn’t have cake, says he won’t have any tea at all, and lies on his back and kicks.”

And then the whole house laughed. It was not because her words were brilliantly witty, for, it is needless to say, they were not, but because her words, her manner, and her appearance together gave one an impression of delicious *naïveté*. It was easy to see that she was a very popular person in the club, and very much admired, and only laughed at in the purest friendliness. Six girls tried to talk to her at once when she sat down.

Lindley’s mind had wandered far away from the debate. Votes were taken, and he neither

knew nor cared what the result was. The club gave Doran a large majority. Then everybody stood up, and Mrs. Lockett came over to Doran and Lindley.

"I say," she said, "I do wish you would both be kind enough to come over and have supper at my little flat. It'll be extremely informal, and probably there'll be nothing to eat, but that doesn't matter. Sonya Fielding will be there, of course, and Harry said he would look in; and then I shall have a better chance to thank you for helping us."

Both men accepted, and disclaimed any thank-worthy merits. Lindley was annoyed that he expressed himself rather clumsily; he could not keep his mind away from Sonya. His eyes involuntarily strayed towards her. Perhaps Mrs. Lockett noticed it.

"But come along, both of you," she said, "we must find Sonya."

She was in the middle of an admiring group at the further end of the room, at one moment laughing and talking carelessly, and at the next serious and deep in thought. Doran shook hands with her with careless cordiality. Then, as Mrs. Lockett brought Lindley forward, she held out her hand.

"But we don't want to be introduced," she said, "do we?"

"It is too good of you to have remembered me," said Lindley.

"But I do, perfectly." Then she turned to Mrs. Lockett. "You know, Sarah, Mr. Kays and I spent part of our extreme childhood together."

"What a nuisance!" said Mrs. Lockett, frankly. "You will want to be talking over old times all the evening, which will be frightfully interesting to you, and no end of a bore to everybody else." Then turning to Lindley, who looked rather staggered. "You don't mind my being quite frank, do you? I am always like that, and it stands in my way terribly. I'll tell you what you might do. You might take Miss Fielding on to the flat, and exhaust the reminiscences of childhood by the way. Then you'll be quite nice people by the time we want you again."

Sonya did not speak to Lindley again until he was putting her into the hansom.

"Where shall I tell the man to drive?" he asked.

Sonya meditated for a moment, and smiled. "Anywhere you like," she said.

Lindley, as he got into the cab, called up "Mansion House" to the driver.

Sonya laughed. "Why did you say that?" she said.

"If I may be as frank as Mrs. Lockett, it was because the Mansion House is some distance away, and, when we got there, I thought there was some probability we might have to drive back again."

"Your cabs must cost you lots of money, if that's the way you take them; but I don't think it'll do, because we meet so little that we shan't have enough reminiscences to last out the journey."

"Yes," said Lindley, "we shall have more than enough!"

"Anyhow," said Sonya, "I think you might tell the man that, for the sake of variety, we should now like to drive to Steyne Gardens, South Kensington."

"Certainly," said Lindley. He pushed up the trap and said gravely and distinctly, "For the sake of variety, we should now like to drive to Steyne Gardens, South Kensington."

Then he and Sonya both laughed, and the cabman thought they were both slightly mad.

"It is really too wonderful," said Lindley, "that you should have remembered me. We only met twice, and only spoke to one another once."

"And did you give it up?" Sonya asked, as if it had happened the day before.

"Oh yes," said Lindley; "I never collected again. It was just as well. I should never have made a man of science. I have grave doubts whether I shall ever make anything."

"Those water-lilies lasted quite a long time. It was queer the way it happened, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Lindley, "between the Hall and the High Street there is a great gulf fixed,

though I know you did not mean that. It was so strange—not that I so much wanted to meet you, and to speak to you, and to know you, but that you should have let me.”

“Let you? Why, I threw a stone at your hat. I was perfectly shameless. Tell me, what did you do after I had gone to Paris?”

Lindley told his story as briefly as possible, and Sonya listened to it with serious interest. Her look of whimsical humour had vanished for a time.

“Then, so far,” she said, “you haven’t done very much good, have you?”

“None whatever, I should say,” said Lindley.

“Well, you must, you know. I’ll help you, if you like. I’m splendid at helping other people, though I don’t seem able to improve myself one bit.”

“For goodness’ sake never try!” said Lindley, fervently. “As for your help, I believe you could make any man do anything.”

“If I could only think that!” cried Sonya, earnestly. “There are particular reasons. Perhaps I’ll tell you all about it one day.”

“And may I hear any of your story?”

“There isn’t much to tell. I travelled a good deal with mamma and Sarah. I think Sir Charles quarrelled with us, and forbade us the house, and was subsequently reconciled about twenty times. I was glad he was reconciled at the time mamma died, though I wouldn’t go and live



there. That was when Sarah and I started this flat together." She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't believe you could be expected to forgive people who've injured other people, and I don't think I've quite forgotten Sir Charles for the way he treated my mother. One day I may go back to him, but at present I avoid meeting him. At present I've got Sarah Lockett, and she's the best and kindest and most unselfish woman in the world, and takes the greatest pains to prevent people from finding it out."

"I liked her," said Lindley, "though she frightened me a bit."

"She does, a little, at first," said Sonya. "We disagree on heaps of points. She's social, and I'm individual. She works at clubs and societies without end, and runs institutions, and organizes movements. I never get beyond trying to do what I can for the people I know intimately. And please don't think that I've got a beautiful missionary spirit. I'm all wrong—Sarah says so."

The cab had reached Steyne Gardens, and Lindley called out the number. The flat was on the first floor. Sonya flung down her cloak in the diminutive hall, and took Lindley into the big drawing-room. The room was furnished rather severely. The big piano at the end of it was used as a piano, and not as a sideboard for the exhibition of curios and photographs. There were sheets of music-paper on the writing-table,

and many volumes of books in the bookshelves. The whole room smelt faintly of violets.

"Do you like this?" Sonya asked. She was standing quite close to him, and looking at him curiously.

"Yes," he said; "but, then, to-night I like everything."

She turned slowly, as if to go up to the piano, and then turned quickly back again, holding out both her hands.

"I'm so glad we've met again, Lindley," she said. For a moment he held her hands, quite unable to speak, and then released them. Then came the click of a latch-key, and Mrs. Lockett's laugh outside in the hall.

## CHAPTER VI

### POSSIBILITIES

"WELL," said Sarah genially, "so you've been discussing the days when you picked cowslips together, and he stole your skipping-rope."

"These are base accusations," said Lindley, "and quite unfounded."

"That's all right," said Sarah, "as long as you've finished with your reminiscences, and are prepared to talk about things that I can understand, I don't really much mind whether you sneaked her skipping-rope or, which is more probable, she stole your hoop."

"I did nothing of the kind," said Sonya; "I was merely a good influence in Mr. Kays' early life."

An electric bell burred, and a quick rap sounded at the outer door.

"All right," said Doran, "I'll let 'em in," and passed out into the hall.

"You see," said Mrs. Lockett to Lindley, "we've got no servants at this time of night; at least, they are all in bed. It's better so. It

makes things a bit of a picnic, but they'd all leave if they heard the kind of thing that Sonya says sometimes at supper, when she gets very much in earnest."

Sonya had the prettiest blush, and her smile showed her little white teeth.

"I never did," she said fervently.

"What!" exclaimed Sarah, "you never said that you were prepared to do the work of any reigning monarch for thirty shillings a week and your board?"

"It is an exaggeration," said Sonya. "I admitted that afterwards, though. Besides, one thinks different things at different times. There are times when I'm quite sorry for monarchs and would like to help them."

It was all said with a child-seriousness, without a trace of acting or affectation, and it was doubtless very foolish, but it was also rather bewitching. Lindley felt that he understood why Sonya's few shy sentences at the club had been the success of the evening, and why that throng of girls gathered round her and worshipped. Doran came back into the room, accompanied by Mrs. Lockett's brother. He was a tall, gaunt, hungry-eyed man, not ill-looking, with a sallow complexion and a nervous mouth, nearly covered by a heavy black moustache. He was far quieter in manner than his sister. He shook hands with Sonya, and Mrs. Lockett presented Lindley Kays.

"This is my brother, Sir Henry Mariland."

"Which," added Sonya, "is a much nicer name than Lockett."

"Nonsense!" said Sarah. "There is more credit in what you've got by your own exertions than in what you were born to."

"Did you exert yourself much?" asked Sonya.

"You are a cat!" said Sarah. "And let's all come into supper, shall we?"

She led the way, opening the door at the further end of the room. For a moment the room beyond looked dark and mysterious. In the middle of the darkness was a tiny blue flame, with a glimmer of metal about it that somehow suggested sorcery. Then Mrs. Lockett switched on the lights, and the blue flame was revealed as a commonplace spirit-lamp which was engaged in keeping the soup hot. The dining-room, like the drawing-room, was somewhat on the severe side. There was an entire absence of those "pretty feminine trifles" that do so much towards making most homes hideous.

Lindley sat next to Sonya, and it was to her that he talked principally. Sir Henry seemed taciturn and a little bored. Doran and Mrs. Lockett were talking about Hyde Park. Sarah, being in the lightest of moods, gave an extremely realistic imitation of an uneducated preacher at the Marble Arch. Everybody laughed except her brother.

"Really, Sarah," he said, "you do the most extraordinary things."

"I don't care," said Sarah. "I'd sooner be a woman and do extraordinary things than be a man and do nothing."

"If that's meant for me," said her brother, "it doesn't apply. I work like a dog when I'm down at Chinfold."

"Oh yes," said Sarah; "you take a look round your stables, and you fine a few poachers, and you drop asleep after lunch, and you go to bed with the impression you've had a hard day of it."

"Ah!" said Sir Henry, "one can't expect a cockney like you, Sarah, to understand all that there is to do in the country."

As they were leaving, Mrs. Lockett said to Lindley—

"I'm going to see you again, you know."

"You might find out first," said Sonya, "if he wants to see you again."

"There's something in that," said Sir Henry.

Lindley made the necessary protestations, and Sonya said that she did not believe them.

Sir Henry remained behind when Doran and Lindley left. The two men walked together, in quest of a cab. Doran glanced at his watch.

"Do you generally go to bed at twelve?" he asked Lindley.

"Never," said Lindley.

"Then, if you like, I'll come round to your flat and have a look at the work you've been doing."

"Do," said Lindley. "It would be awfully good of you. Here's a hansom at last."

"So you'd met Sonya Fielding before?" said Doran.

"Only once, by chance, when I was at school in Haxteth. You seem to know them well."

"Yes," said Doran, "I've known Sarah Lockett a long time, and she's a thoroughly good sort, in spite of her eccentricities. Likewise she's no mean musician. You must get her to play to you one of these days. What did you think of her brother?"

"Sir Henry? I don't know that I noticed him very much. In fact, all I remember of him is that he said very little, and drank nothing but water."

"Yes," said Doran. "Your observations were rather concentrated in one direction. Well, after all, those two women have got some sort of purpose in life; they ain't fooling the time away entirely. I shouldn't like to swear that Sarah Lockett's philanthropy doesn't do as much harm as good, but she honestly does her best. As for Sonya, I'm afraid she's going to make a very dangerous experiment."

"What is that?" asked Lindley eagerly.

"I have promised not to speak of it, and I don't want to speak of it; I hate even thinking of it."

At Lindley's rooms Doran mixed himself a whisky-and-soda, filled and lit his briar pipe, and established himself in a comfortable chair.

"Now, then," he said, "bring along your stuff and let's have a look at it. I shan't take long over it. You can read a book or go to sleep till I've finished."

He went through the little collection rapidly, never seeming to read the whole of any one thing, until he came to a little note-book.

"That's very much in the rough," said Lindley, "and full of corrections; in fact, it's little more than a scenario. I don't think you'll be able to make it out."

"I'll have a shot at it," said Doran.

He went through it to the end, and then turned back and went through it again. He put the book down, rose, and re-filled his pipe. So far he had made no comment of any kind.

"What a fool you are, Kays!" he said solemnly.

"In what particular way?" asked Lindley. "You mean the stuff's no good?"

"No, no; nothing of the kind. You're a fool because, when you can naturally do one thing well, you give yourself any amount of trouble to do another. You can, apparently, construct a play which has new ideas in it, and you've got, goodness knows how, plenty of stage-craft, and your dialogue is simply ripping. Yet you want to waste your time writing middles for the *English Review*, and reviewing books and little things of that kind."

"Well," said Lindley, "I simply began the



play for fun. I never imagined there would be a chance of getting it acted. But I did think there was a chance of getting some of the other things printed."

"Undoubtedly," said Doran, "it's much harder to get a play put on than it is to get an article accepted. That's true enough, my son. But the play may mean comparatively a fortune, and the other thing can't, at the very best, mean much more than the means of subsistence. Well, I know a man who wants a play, and it's my conviction that he want's this play. Get it finished and typed out fairly and send it to me."

"I will," said Lindley. "This is very good of you."

"You can thank me," said Doran, "when I've done something. At present the play is no more than a possibility ; but you've got a chance."

When Doran had gone, Lindley still sat thinking. It had been rather a queer, perplexing night, and the subject which filled his mind was not his own play, but that dangerous experiment which, Doran had told him, Sonya was about to make. What on earth could it be ?

And how sweet she was ! And how far, how very far away from him !

## CHAPTER VII

### JIMMIE

LINDLEY woke late next morning and in a bad temper. The morning showed the facts relentlessly. He was in love with Sonya, and he would never, by any possibility, be able to marry her. It would have been better if they had never met. He looked over the scenario of the play, and could see nothing in it, and could not imagine what Doran had seen in it. However, he supposed, since Sonya said so, that he ought to get to work and do something. The play was the nearest thing to hand. He sat down to it about mid-day, and got up from it at six that evening. Letters had been brought in to him, but he had taken no notice of them. He began opening them now, without any feeling of interest in them. The first was from Anna, brief and cheerful, except for the statement that she was afraid Walter was not doing very well. The next was a passionate appeal to Lindley Kays, Esquire, or present occupier, to buy coals at the present low prices. And the third, written in a sprawling feminine hand, ran as follows :—

"DEAR MR. KAYS,

"We are always at home on Sunday afternoon, and we generally make some music, and we shall be very glad to see you. Sonya says I did not thank you properly for helping us at the debate last night. She's probably wrong, but I'll thank you again."

The signature was illegible, but it was not difficult to conjecture it. Lindley shook his head.

"Not I!" he said emphatically. He dined at a restaurant alone, and seriously wounded the feeling of a Swiss waiter. He was sick of theatres and of music-halls and of everything else, or so, at least for the moment, he was convinced. He had hardly got back to his rooms when the bell rang. His one servant being out, he answered the door himself, and was not altogether sorry to find Mr. James Haming there.

"That you, Jimmie? Good. Come along in. I was going to have got drunk all by myself, and now you can keep me company. But what have you done with those young suburban lambs that you're teaching Latin grammar to? This isn't your free night, is it?"

"All my nights are free now," said Jimmie. "The school's off—chucked—done with. I came here to give you my news."

Lindley, looking at him more closely, noticed that Jimmie was dressed in a complete suit of black, with a black necktie, and that he had even

gone so far as to have a narrow black border to his handkerchief. Jimmie's face, indicative of the sunniest good humour, was wildly out of keeping with his clothes.

"I see you are in mourning," said Lindley. "Have you had any loss?"

"Yes," said Jimmie, cheerfully, "I've lost an uncle—awfully fine old cock he was too, though I knew next to nothing of him. Still, as he's left me three thousand pounds, I thought I ought to get a proper rig-out in his honour. I went to the funeral too. That funeral service seems to take a lot for granted. My uncle was a rip, you know. I tried to imagine him as an angel, and I couldn't do it."

Lindley burst out laughing.

"I say," said Jimmie, "there's nothing to laugh about in a thing of that kind. Of course it does more or less make up for the loss, that I've been able to chuck that infernal box of small boys."

"And what are you going to do with yourself now?" asked Lindley.

"I've talked it over with the governor, and we've settled it. I'm going back to Cambridge to get my degree."

"Then," said Lindley, "you won't get your degree, and you'll do your level best to squander your three thousand."

"You're wrong," said Jimmie, with great earnestness. "I'm going up to be a smug. I intend to be a smug, and I will be a smug. I've

bought special smug clothes, which would make any man go to his coach. The old days are done with."

"I wouldn't like to bet on it," said Lindley.

"You might bet every penny you'd got on it with the utmost safety. A new influence has come into my life."

"Jimmie," said Lindley, "you're engaged."

"I am," said Jimmie, quietly.

"Poor girl!" said Lindley.

"So I think," said Jimmie.

"Well, you sit there, and give me half a minute in which to get the whisky, then you shall tell me all about it."

Jimmie did tell him all about it, and Lindley listened, outwardly sympathetic, inwardly raging. James Haming took one whisky, and no more, and left at half-past ten. His course of virtue had already begun. Lindley went back to his play, and worked until the small hours. His last act before going to bed was to burn Sarah Lockett's letter, and to hope fervently that she might forget the address.

On Sunday morning Doran came to see him, went over the new work which had been done on the play, and approved of it.

"Now then, Kays," he said, "we'll go and get some lunch at one of the beastly pot-houses in your neighbourhood, and later in the afternoon we might go and call on Sarah Lockett."

"That's all right," said Lindley, "so far as

lunch is concerned, and don't let me stop you making the journey to South Kensington ; but I'm not going myself, though she was good enough to write and say she was at home on Sundays."

"Why not?" asked Doran.

"It's too far away," said Lindley. This was, perhaps, the most futile lie he ever told.

"What utter nonsense!" said Doran. "I introduced you, and I'm responsible for you, and I'm not going to let you disgrace me by being so abominably uncivil. You must call this once. You can chuck it afterwards, of course, if you like. As for the distance, you may not have noticed it ; but there are hansoms in London. If we share a hansom, that becomes an economy. See what you save."

So Lindley gave in, and changed his clothes and presented himself in all his glory at Mrs. Lockett's flat. Mrs. Lockett gave him one moment, and then introduced him to a gentleman whose name he did not catch, but who was fat and foreign. The rooms were crowded. Sonya gave him her hand as she went past with Sir Henry Mariland. The fat and foreign gentleman had got on to the question of food. Finding that Lindley knew little or nothing of the many varieties of German sausage, he proceeded to instruct him with great gravity and a raised fat forefinger. Of some varieties he spoke with ecstasy and upturned eyes, and of others with a lingering regret. Lindley was not altogether

sorry when Mrs. Lockett took away the fat foreigner to the piano.

But he was surprised. The man remained slightly grotesque to look at, but when he began to sing, one forgot all that. He had a fine tenor, and was an accomplished artist. He sang romantic words, set to beautiful music, with the utmost expression. It seemed almost impossible to reconcile such fine poetical feeling with so deep an interest in Metwurst.

Lindley complimented the singer afterwards, and said that he thought how beautiful it had been.

"Ah, my frient," said the fat man, "it would have been bedder, but I eat too much lonsh. It is always so—every day too much lonsh."

Then, finding that Lindley really knew something of music, the great man condescended to talk about it.

And all the time Sonya kept away from him. It was absurd to excuse her on the grounds that she had so many other guests to attend to. She still remained with Sir Henry, and sat talking with him now, away in a distant corner of the room. Mrs. Lockett herself was playing now, and Lindley recognized that Doran had not exceeded the truth in saying she was no mean musician. Here, too, it seemed strange that a person of such unromantic appearance should have such splendid fervour and passion. If Lindley had not heard her play he would never

have credited her with it. He rose to go when she had finished, and blended his thanks with his farewell. For a moment he hesitated whether or not he should fight his way up to the corner where Sonya was sitting. At that moment Sonya looked up, beckoned to him with her eyes, and came towards him.

"Tell me," she said, "are you very busy in the mornings? Because, if not, I want you to do something for me."

"I should be glad to do anything for you at any time," said Lindley.

"Well, it's nothing very much. I want you to show me Kensington Gardens."

It was said with perfect seriousness, and Lindley, on the verge of saying that she lived close to the gardens, and must have been through them hundreds of times, checked himself.

"I should like to do that very much," he said.

"To-morrow morning, then, about eleven. Good-bye." As she gave him her hand, she added, "Don't look too bewildered."



CHAPTER VIII  
ABOUT SIR HENRY

DORAN was one of the last to leave that afternoon. He knew many people there, and did his duty in talking to them; but he looked a bit worried. As he was leaving, a very old gentleman, upright and dressed with obvious care, touched him on the arm.

"Going, Doran?" he said.

"Yes, Mr. Graves. I suppose one must either go or be thrown out about this time."

"Well, now," said Graves, in a confidential voice, "are you doing anything? Are you dining anywhere?"

Doran hoped he was dining somewhere, but could not pretend to say where.

"Then," said Mr. Graves, "do be a good fellow, and come along to the club with me. I rather want to have a talk with you about our friends here."

"Thanks," said Doran, "I should like that very much."

Mr. Graves' brougham was waiting, and they got in.

"Turned a bit chilly, hasn't it?" said Doran.

Graves paused before replying, and then said, "If there is a damnable madwoman in this world than Sarah Lockett, it is Sonya Fielding, and they're both as good as gold."

"I know, of course, what you're thinking about," said Doran; "but what can one do? Sir Henry's her brother, you see, and it's a pretty delicate business. I'm an old friend, and I did venture on a hint or two to Sarah as to what my opinion was. You, a far older friend, have done the same, and I don't think either of us made any impression."

"Didn't we?" said Mr. Graves, chuckling. "Sarah called me an impertinent old fool, anyhow. But it is true that they're perfectly free, and have got all the legal lights, and are as obstinate as cast-iron mules. How did you think he was looking?"

"To be honest, I thought he was looking all right. A young friend of mine, whom I brought here, noticed at supper the other night that he drank nothing but water. I hadn't observed it myself."

"If he drinks nothing but water, it's because he daren't. What an absolutely infernal business it is!"

After dinner they came back to the subject again, still talking over the same three people—Sir Henry Mariland and Sarah Lockett and Sonya Fielding—and the only conclusion they

could come to was that Mr. Graves must risk a further remonstrance.

"If only Providence would make her fall in love with somebody else," said Mr. Graves.

"Ah!" said Doran; "and are you absolutely sure that that would make any difference?"

Mr. Graves thought it over a few moments, and then shook his old grey head.

"No," he said, "I can't say that I am."

Lindley was punctual in keeping his engagement on Monday morning. He found Sonya all ready, and waiting for him. In the next room he could hear Sarah Lockett and the fat foreign gentleman quarrelling violently.

"You have sboiled it gombletely, gombletely. It vos a pudivul thing, and now——"

"Listen, you donkey!" shouted Sarah. "It wasn't grammatical—it wasn't possible—everybody would have laughed who knew anything about it. Now, like this——"

She broke off, and played a passage on the piano.

"Oh, my Gott!" groaned the big man.

"Shall we leave them to fight it out?" said Sonya, laughing. "And where shall we go?"

Lindley could not help a look of slight surprise.

"Wasn't it to be Kensington Gardens?" he said. "That was what you suggested."

"Yes, I did; but I don't dream of going there.

I'm tired of it. Let's go and be middle-class in Regent's Park."

"That," said Lindley, "is an unnecessary downfall for you, and a hopeless ambition for me; but we'll risk it. Now, I wonder——"

"Yes," said Sonya, "you wonder why I came up to you yesterday afternoon and asked you to show me Kensington Gardens. I rather wonder at it myself. If you'll keep quiet, and think out some more smart things about social positions and rubbish of that kind, I'll try to discover why I did it, and then I'll tell you the truth."

There was a long pause. As the hansom sped on its way northward, Sonya seemed to be watching the buildings, or the people in the street, with vivacious interest, and had not in the least the air of one who tries to solve a problem. But suddenly she said—

"In the first place you were very angry, and had nearly made up your mind to sulk off without saying good-bye to me."

"How on earth could you know that?"

"How on earth could one miss it? Then, again, it was a kind of test question. I'm not mean enough to do it intentionally, but I do it unconsciously. Asking the normal question you get the normal answer. But a question which sounds a little frantic brings out the true personality of the person who is talking to you. Is that nonsense?"

"Well," said Lindley, "it's very difficult."

"Also," said Sonya, "one's stupid sense of humour comes in. It amused me that a cockney living on the top of the gardens should ask to be shown them. Like most of one's little household jokes, it doesn't look brilliant under the microscope. And lastly, I did really want to talk to you, and I couldn't do it that afternoon." She gave a great sigh of relief. "There," she said, "I've analyzed it right out, and discovered the exact motives, and I'm not quite certain whether it was worth while. But," she added, "there's quite a nice little shop in Regent's Park where one can buy toffee, and we'll go and get some."

They dismissed their cab at the shop, and Lindley bought as he was bidden. Then, as Sonya said that she wished to eat her toffee without insolent ostentation or arousing the envy of the mob, they went by by-ways, and found two penny chairs, and a sufficient seclusion. Suddenly Sonya asked—

"What do you think of Sir Henry Mariland?"

"This is becoming epidemic, Miss Fielding. Only the other day Doran asked me the same question."

"Did he?" said Sonya, eagerly. "What did he say? What did he tell you?"

"He told me nothing. I think we got away from the subject, but I really forget. As you know, I have hardly seen Sir Henry, and don't suppose I've exchanged a dozen words with him. How can I form an opinion?"

"You are too grown-up and cautious. When you were a little boy, you formed an opinion of a little girl to whom you had never even spoken at all."

"I did," said Lindley, "and it was quite right. But one cannot always do it. I should have said that Sir Henry was rather a silent and gloomy man, and I noticed that he was a water-drinker; but it would not surprise me if people who knew him more intimately told me that in reality he was a gay chatter-box, and an habitual drunkard."

Sonya perceptibly winced. "I know him intimately," she said, "and I can tell you that he is not."

"But, of course," said Lindley, "you didn't for one moment imagine that I was speaking seriously, did you? I noticed, too, that he was remarkably unlike his sister, Mrs. Lockett."

"Yes, that is so. She's devoted to him, and very angry that he won't do more. She wants him to go into Parliament, but he's a quiet man and loves the country. And now," she said, "tell me all about yourself."

And they talked out themselves, without noticing how the time went, till Sonya heard a clock strike, and said that she was lost. It was one o'clock, and luncheon was at one, and she had promised to bring Lindley back for it. Sarah and the fat man would be raging horribly, for Sarah liked punctuality, and the fat man liked food.

As it happened, when a swift hansom had brought them back to South Kensington, they found Sarah and the fat man still quarrelling over the piano. "To bring a gombosition to you, Mrs. Lockett," the fat man was saying, "is to brage ze heart. You tink of noding but ze grammar, always ze grammar." They gazed at one another with expressions indicative of hatred and contempt. A few minutes later they were chatting amicably at the luncheon-table, and the fat man was giving satisfactory evidence that the alterations and repairs to his compositions had not affected his appetite.

CHAPTER IX  
STRANGE ADVICE

SIX months later, Lindley and Doran came out of the stage door of the Society Theatre at four one afternoon.

"How do you think it went?" Lindley asked eagerly.

"I only saw that last scene, and, of course, that didn't go at all."

"You can't imagine," said Lindley, "how damnably sick of it all I am. We've been at it pretty well continuously since eleven. I've heard my stuff repeated so often that I hardly know what I meant by it myself now. Everybody's in a bad temper, and I've had no lunch, and I shall be jolly glad when the thing's over, one way or the other. Still, it's a low-down trick to come grumbling to you like this. You got me my chance, and you know that I don't undervalue it, really."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Doran; "it's not unnatural that it should have got on your nerves a bit. By the way, were you at Mrs. Lockett's on Sunday?"



"I was," said Lindley. "You see, I can't always get my own way as the tried and successful playwright can; they all come up and advise me, and rotten advice it is mostly. In the end everybody has to do what Sefton wants."

"Yes," said Doran, "that would be so. Have you missed a single Sunday at Mrs. Lockett's for the last three months?"

"I should think so—perhaps not. What on earth does it matter? One must go somewhere."

"All right—don't get savage. I perfectly understand. Six months ago the distance from your flat to South Kensington was too great to be traversed, but it has shrunk since. Look here, if you want to earn the blessings of old Graves, and of myself, do you know what you'll do?"

"I shan't stop going to Mrs. Lockett's just because you imagine——"

"Wait a minute, my son. What we should like you to do would be to run away with Sonya Fielding."

Lindley stopped short and surveyed his friend anxiously.

"Have you suddenly gone mad, Doran?" he asked.

"Not in the least. There are things you don't know, and have not been told, and ought to have been told. I've no right to tell them, but I've every right to use what I know in advising you. Fix up a special licence and run away with her. It would be best for her and best for you."

"But you won't tell me why?"

"I can't. The reason's good enough. If you don't take my advice—and I can see how frantic it must sound—I give you my word that one day you'll be sorry for it."

"This is rather astonishing," said Lindley, "there are a good many points to be considered, you know. I couldn't discuss Miss Fielding with anybody, even with you. You are taking a good deal for granted, as far as she is concerned."

"True enough," said Doran.

"And look at the difference in our positions," said Lindley. "Do you think Miss Fielding is the wife for a poor man?"

"I think her clever enough to adapt herself to any circumstances," said Doran. "And I will remind you that a successful dramatist ceases to be a poor man."

"Right," said Lindley. "I'll remind you of this when the piece is damned and withdrawn. As for your advice, I'm afraid I can't listen to it. What on earth's all the mystery about Miss Fielding?"

"You go there constantly, you squander your substance in riotous theatre-parties in order to entertain them. At times I can't make out how it is that you haven't seen and guessed for yourself. I admit they do it very well."

"What is it they do very well? Oh, this is too maddening! Let's quit the subject. What's the good of talking about the impossible?"

"Suppose," said Doran, "I took you to see old Graves, and he gave you exactly the same advice that I have done, would you take it? If so, I'll take you to him at once."

"No," said Lindley. "I've got the greatest respect and liking for old Graves—everybody has. The fact that he and you, both of whom are remarkably cautious men, should advise me to an act of madness, perplexes me, but it doesn't convince me. I will be perfectly frank with you; if this piece of mine goes all right, I shall take my chance of doing the same thing in a better and more regular way, and even then I have no hopes."

"Very well," said Doran, "I'll say no more about it. I didn't expect that you'd take the advice, because you haven't the means to know how good it is. Never mind. Come and have a drink, and wash the dust of that infernal theatre from your throat."

"That's not a bad idea," said Lindley; "and my flat happens to be handy. Let's go on there."

"Look here, Kays," said Doran, as he added a great deal of soda-water to a very little whisky. "Do you know if there are any other flats to let in this place?"

"None at present, I believe. There was one right at the top, but the porter told me yesterday it had been taken. Why? What do millionaires, with suites of rooms in the Granville Hotel, want with flats in Bloomsbury?"

"That's just the point," said Doran. "I'm not a millionaire, and the Granville's expensive. I don't know that I should mind that alone, for, after all, I've nobody but myself dependent on me, and I think it my duty to take the utmost care of him; but I'm not really comfortable there. To live in a hotel makes one feel like a stranger and a sojourner. There's a want of permanence. Indirectly it makes one buy fewer books. Then there's too much change. As soon as a valet has learnt my ways the beggar goes. Either he get's sacked for being bad, or he get's promoted for being good. They don't seem to be able to hit on a man of just the right goodness or badness to remain in attendance on me, and I'm sick of it."

"Well, what do you want?" asked Lindley.

"I want something permanent, and I want my own servants. This place is clean and quiet and well looked after. If there had been a flat to let there, I'd have taken it right away. As it is, you might as well let me have yours."

"Might—but shan't," said Lindley.

"You're a selfish beggar," said Doran, reflectively. "By the way, what do you think of Lord Monneret, now you've met him in the flesh?"

"I hate his opinions," said Lindley. "I always have done. They are inherited and fossilized and useless to the point of dangerousness at the present day. The man himself is delightful."

"You think he's straight?"

"Why ask such a question? You know perfectly well that he is."

Doran smiled. "I was only thinking of that first article you sent me to the *English Review*, less than a year ago. In that, if I remember rightly, you implied that Monneret——"

"Yes, I know, I know," said Lindley impatiently. "I was a fool, and knew nothing and nobody. I've pretty good reasons for believing I'm a fool still."

"In some ways you are," said Doran. "You don't always take good advice when it's given you, but you've put on a good deal in the way of experience since you came to town."

"Thanks to you chiefly," said Lindley. "What about Melton's new book?"

"Sorry, but you can't have it," said Doran. "I'm going to review that myself. But you'll get another batch from the office this evening. I wish I could have got to that rehearsal earlier."

"It was very good of you to come at all," said Lindley. "You saw the worst of it, anyhow."

"Sefton get on your nerves at all?"

"Yes, at times. I get on his also. But he's not nearly so bad as some of them; he's intelligent, and he works hard, and plays as if he meant it all the time. Some of the crowd get frightfully slack."

"It's a new departure for him," said Doran. "I should say the piece depends principally

upon him, which, of course, is exactly what he wants and likes; but there's a risk the public mayn't like to see him doing anything but what they're accustomed to."

"Yes," said Lindley, "I'd thought of that. In moments of depression I don't care a damn either way. Anyhow, it's not long to wait now."

Doran glanced at his watch. "I must be off," he said. "I'm due back at the office. Seriously, if you do hear of a flat to let in this place, I wish you'd let me know."

"I will," said Lindley. "Perhaps I'll let you have mine, after all, when I get tired of it."

When Doran had gone, Lindley sat down before the fire with his note-book in his hand. He had to alter three lines of dialogue. They were strong lines, and Iris Marsh was not strong enough to speak them properly. She made them ridiculous. They had to be altered in such a way that Iris Marsh would not suspect the motive of the operation; otherwise that beautiful actress would have lost her temper. And they had to get the same effect, as nearly as possible, as the lines originally written. The alteration took him exactly one hour and a half. Lindley flung down his note-book. He had in his pocket a letter from Jimmie Haming. It was rhapsodical on the subject of his engagement. "Lucky chap!" said Lindley to himself. His own case seemed miserable by contrast. He reflected on the extraordinary advice of Doran and old Graves.

The thing was ridiculous. Of late Sonya had seemed rather to avoid him—at any rate, to avoid being alone with him. She would not have listened for a moment. And if she had, any such mad scheme must injure her in the eyes of others—perhaps in her own eyes too. It was not to be thought of.

And, as it was necessary to think of something else, Lindley went round to the club and played pool extremely badly until dinner-time.

## CHAPTER X

### SUCCESS

LINDLEY sat at his breakfast in his flat, with the *Times* newspaper before him. The critic of the *Times* quoted Aristotle, introduced algebraical formulæ, used the most idiomatic French, and generally gave one the impression of a scholarly detachment. But he recorded the fact that the play had been extremely well received, prophesied a long run for it, and admitted that it deserved it better than some of the other successful plays at that time before the public. He had a stack of other newspapers beside him, and in most of them he found the highest eulogy of Sefton, and even a few words of praise for the man who had invented the play.

Sefton certainly had been splendid—Lindley admitted it to himself. He had been so good that the public had for once forgiven him for not wearing a frock-coat and creased trousers. At the close of the piece the author was "not in the house." But he was at the Savoy shortly after with Mrs. Lockett and Sonya and Doran and Iris Marsh. For a young dramatic author who



had really made a hit, he was remarkably quiet that night. He could not help thinking how much more bitter this gain would make another loss seem, if he did not lose. Doran chaffed him, and reminded him what the devil's darling sin was—an allusion that was lost on Sefton. But Sefton was very great. He brought the art of bragging with every appearance of modesty well-nigh to perfection. He took Lindley aside to say that he was not going to talk business that night, but that he hoped that Lindley would look round at the theatre on the following afternoon, and would make no future arrangements until he had seen him. Iris Marsh fell an instantaneous victim to Sonya, and Sonya did her best to admire the great beauty of the actress, and overlook her still greater stupidity. Mrs. Lockett was in the best and wildest of spirits, and talked loudly and impartially about everything to everybody. As Sonya said good-bye to Lindley, she had added, "And I'm awfully proud of you."

The first interviewer called at 11 a.m. sharp, and left at 11.3 a.m. precisely. Lindley had a stack of novels on the table, which he had already been through, and he now began to review them. He wrote with great difficulty that morning, and was vexed to find that only used phrases and banal sentences would come into his head. It was as if the slovenly mediocrity of the work before him had infected him. He was not sorry when a visit from Doran interrupted him.

"I've only got a couple of minutes," said Doran; "but I thought I'd look in to tell you to be careful with what you're doing with Sefton. He's a good chap enough, but naturally he's looking after himself. Don't tie yourself down more than you can help."

"Yes," said Lindley. "I'd thought of that, and, as far as my work is concerned, I shan't tie myself down at all. It's always difficult for me to do what I've got to do. For instance, I'm making a filthy mess of this review for you."

"It doesn't speak altogether badly for you," said Doran, "that the morning after you've had a considerable success, and one which must bring you a considerable amount of money, you can go back to your ordinary run of work as if nothing had happened."

"That would be so," said Lindley; "but unfortunately, I thought so too, and that was my sole reason for doing it."

"Well," said Doran cheerfully, "as I don't seem to be able to think of anything you haven't thought of before, and as I've got no time to be here at all, I'll take myself off. Go delicately with Sefton."

When Lindley left Sefton that afternoon, the great actor-manager said, smilingly—

"And yet there's a tradition that you authors are not business men, and don't know how to take care of yourselves."

"Ah!" said Lindley; "but then I've inherited business instincts."

As a matter of fact, Lindley had not forgotten how much he owed to Sefton, and the arrangement he had just made with him was generous, without being foolish. As he came out the theatre Lindley hesitated. He had half a mind to go to Mrs. Lockett's, but he thought it would look a little as if he were passing the hat round for further praise and congratulations. If he went to the club, men would talk to him about that play, and that was the last thing he wanted to talk about. He went back to his rooms, and Masters, his servant, came in to him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Masters, "but might I ask if you're dining in this evening?"

"No," said Lindley.

"Then, sir," said Masters, "I should be glad to have the evening, if it's quite convenient to you."

"Certainly," said Lindley.

"I hardly like to ask it," Masters went on. "I had thought of going to the theatre this evening. We all saw the papers, of course, this morning, and I'm sure I was very pleased. I didn't know whether you could——"

"All right," said Lindley, "give me one of my cards and a pencil. Give them that at the box office, and they'll give you a seat if they can. But they won't be able to do much for you so early in the run. By the way, you can go now

if you like. I am going out directly myself, and shan't want anything else."

But Lindley did not go out directly. He heard the outer door of the flat close, and felt it a sort of comfort to be quite alone there, without even a servant to speak to him. He stared into the fire, and his mind wandered back to the old days. He thought of the things that, as an unhappy little boy, he had wanted, and how he had got them all. And of what slight importance they seemed now that he had got them. The real value of life did not lie in them. His cigarette had gone out, and he flung it into the fire.

What on earth had Doran and Graves meant? Why had Sonya seemed to avoid him? Did she distrust him? Was she angry with him for anything he had said? And that taciturn man, Sir Henry Mariland, why was he so frequently there? Was it for his sister's sake, or Sonya's? He was a part of the mystery.

Very faintly Lindley heard the ting of the electric bell. Another interviewer? He rose with an expression of disgust, and went out into the passage and opened the front door. There stood there a slight figure, wrapped in furs, breathing quickly. Lindley shivered.

"May I come in?" said Sonya Fielding.

## CHAPTER XI

### GOOD-BYE

LINDLEY could hardly remember afterwards what he said just then. The sitting-room was dark, and as he lighted the candles on the mantelpiece he saw her for the first time distinctly. She was taking off her fur coat, and watching him with a pathetic smile on her lips. Neither then nor afterwards did she make the least allusion to the fact that she was doing an indiscreet thing, or seem in any way conscious of it. Lindley put a chair for her near to the fire, and began drawing the curtains over the window.

"Thank you," said Sonya, as she sat down. "Sarah was away at a concert, and I was left all alone. I began to think about the play last night, and about you. And I thought it would be a good thing to come and see you. You don't mind? I'm not interrupting your work?"

"No, Miss Fielding," said Lindley, slowly and absent-mindedly. "I am glad you've come." He took his place on the other side of the fire, and looked at her intently.

"Why do you look at me so hard?" she said. "What shall we talk about?" In her manner, and in the tone of her voice, she seemed to be trying to be her bright, normal self. And the sadness of her eyes contradicted it all.

"I should be content, and more than content," said Lindley, "to talk about nothing for a while, and to go on looking at you. I should like to remember you just like this for evermore."

Sonya put one hand over her eyes quickly. "Don't," she said, with a catch in her voice. "It's no good, it's no good. Come, we must talk about the play."

"No," said Lindley; "the time has come to talk about other things. It had to come, and it is here. Do you know that I love you?"

She bowed her head.

"Do you know it?" he repeated.

"I have known it a long time," she said, looking at him for the first time. "And you have made me love you too. You have made me. I couldn't help it." She rose at once. "And that ends everything. I must leave you now, Lindley, and we mustn't meet any more. It'll be——"

She stopped abruptly and turned her back on him, walking away to the window. She stood there for a moment, her face hidden in the folds of the soft curtain.

"No," said Lindley; "that can't be. Nothing can come between us now—not even my own unworthiness."

She turned round and faced him. "For the last year," she said, "I have been engaged to Sarah's brother. The engagement will be publicly announced to-morrow."

"That cannot be helped," said Lindley. "Sir Henry himself, if he knew, would release you."

"I came here, Lindley, to tell you some things that I think I should have told you before." She came back to her place by the fire. "Some of the things may seem to you rather horrible. I won't look at you while I'm talking." She paused for a moment, and then gazing into the fire, spoke in a low voice. "You must have read," she said, "something of the price which genius has to pay. One cannot read their lives without coming across it so often. Sometimes the blessing and the curse come together, and sometimes one in a family may have the blessing, and a brother or sister may have the curse. I was reading Charles Lamb's letters again last night. You remember about his sister?"

"Yes," said Lindley.

"The Marilands have all tended to break away from the normal. Dear Sarah is a little eccentric, you know; but she has the blessing, and Harry has the curse. I think I told you how good Sarah was to me when my mother died. Indeed, she has always been good to me. I knew her long before I knew her brother. When I met him in London, it surprised me rather to remember how very little she had said

to me about him. I heard some rather splendid things that he had done, and I was inclined to like him. He said very little, but I knew how he thought of me. Then one afternoon he came to the flat. I don't think I noticed anything particular myself. But as soon as he had gone, Sarah burst into an agony of tears."

"Do spare yourself this," said Lindley. "I can guess it all."

"No, no," said Sonya, "I must tell you. Sarah told me then that there was only one thing on earth could save him, and that was his love for me. Then I felt all my soul lifted up, and I said that I would save him. I saw him the next day. I can't tell you about the scene between us. He insisted that our engagement should, for a year, be known only to his sister and a few of our oldest friends. You see, he was not sure of himself. If I failed and he fell back again, then we were to part. But now, after a year, he feels more confident. Only one thing, he says, could send him back to hell, and that would be the loss of me."

"And I am to lose you?" said Lindley, in a hard voice, "I am to lose you for a—for a man like that?"

"I dare not give him up. I dare not undo my own work there. How could I ever have a moment of happiness? Always I should be imagining horrible things. The strong must suffer for the weak."





Lindley sat down, and laughed a little. "And so my play was a great success? Oh, good God! what's the sense of it all? To come so near, and to lose all!"

"Don't!" she said. "Don't take it like that. I want to ask a favour of you. I said that the strong must suffer for the weak. And I want you to show me that you're strong. I can't say things to console you; why, I can't even console myself. And, do you know, I can't feel sorry that we've met, though we must not meet any more, and it has brought us such unhappiness."

"I am stunned by the horror of all this," said Lindley. "I cannot find anything to say." He noticed the look of pain grow harder on her sensitive face. "No, Sonya, there is just this to say—that I will not fail you, that I will do nothing which would increase your pain."

Sonya stood up and began putting on her little fur coat.

"I do not think I can talk any more either," she said. "I should begin to cry. Perhaps I may write to you—once. But we shall not meet any more now, and, as this is the last time, I am going to kiss you as I say good-bye."

For a moment he held her in his arms, and their lips met. Then he stood, dazed and alone, in the middle of the room. He heard the outer door shut, and her footsteps as she went down the stairs.

## CHAPTER XII

### FLIGHT

THE candles on the mantelpiece burned low in their sockets. Lindley still sat there, motionless, deep in thought. An hour ago he had heard the postman's sharp rap and the rattle of letters in the box. He had been trying, and failing, to think out something for the future. He must get away—get away at once. He half rose, with the intention of packing a portmanteau there and then, then sank back again. For the time all energy of mind and body had been knocked out of him. He was dreaming again, with his eyes wide open, when he heard a latch-key in the outer door. Could it be so late? He glanced at his watch. Yes; that was Masters back from the theatre.

Masters brought in the letters, and Lindley thanked him as he took them. He was conscious that Masters was saying something respectfully complimentary about the play; that the house had been very enthusiastic.

"I'm glad," said Lindley; "thanks."

He opened the first letter mechanically. It

was in Anna's handwriting, and written from Bordighera. It was the last page of the letter which caught his eye, and began in the middle of a sentence. "Better you should go up to Haxteth at once. Of course, if things could be put right by lending him a little money, Hubert and I would be glad to do it. But Walter writes such stupid letters, that it's difficult to understand what he really does mean. Do write and let me know."

Lindley put the letter down, and woke up.

"Masters," he said, and then noticed that Masters was no longer in the room. He touched the bell, and the man entered. "I say," Lindley began, "I didn't know it was so late. I'm afraid I've forgotten about dinner. Would you——"

"I had noticed it, sir. I was laying supper in the dining-room when you rang."

"Thanks," said Lindley, and turned back to Anna's letter. He read it all through carefully twice over. There was not much to learn as to the details of Walter's trouble; but he had apparently written to Anna that the business had gone to the dogs, and that bankruptcy seemed inevitable. Lindley could not understand it at all. Walter was not brilliant; but Lindley had always considered him a solid man, capable at least of carrying on an old-established business, in which there was practically no competition. He found himself almost glad that it had happened. It called him away, and he



burned to get away. It might even provide him a new activity, that best of anodynes. Masters announced that supper was ready.

"I am leaving for the north to-morrow, Masters," said Lindley. "Probably by one of the night expresses. I may be away some time. I am expecting that Mr. Doran will take this flat while I'm away, and you might possibly like to remain here with him, as I can't take you with me."

Masters seemed surprised; but he had seen Mr. Doran often, and had formed a high opinion of him. He was willing to take care of Mr. Doran.

"I'll tell you all about it in the morning," said Lindley. "You needn't sit up now. I'll look after myself."

Lindley ate and drank, and then went to bed, and slept the sleep of complete exhaustion. The next morning he rose late, and began to be very busy. There were several letters to write, and many things to arrange. He was beginning a note to Doran, when Doran himself entered.

"Morning," said Lindley. "Would you like to take my flat as it is, Masters included?"

"Of course I should," said Doran. "I've told you so before. But you don't mean to go?"

"I'm leaving London to-night," said Lindley, "and you can come in to-morrow, if you like."

"But what on earth are you leaving London for?"

"Well," said Lindley, "there are several reasons. I'm going back to the shop. What do you think of this?" He read out extracts from Anna's letter.

"Well," said Doran, "I'm very sorry to hear it; but I don't find anything there to keep you away for more than a week. In that time you will have found out what can be done, and what money is wanted to save the poor chap."

"I don't know that I particularly want to save him," said Lindley. "He and I never cared for one another. But I want to save the name, and I am by no means sure, from the letter, that this can be done simply by lending him a little money. Fool though he is, I can't imagine how he's got himself into this mess."

"Don't drink, does he?" asked Doran, lazily.

"If he did," said Lindley, savagely, "I wouldn't raise one little finger to save him from hell."

Doran thought that sentence over, and knew from it Lindley's chief reason for leaving London. But he did not refer to it. He went on to speak about his tenancy of the flat. Each wanted to give better terms than the other would take; but they came to an arrangement.

"By the way," said Lindley, as Doran was going, "I had meant to get round to Kensington this afternoon; but I find I shan't have the time. There's such a deuce of a lot of packing to do. Perhaps, if you see Mrs. Lockett, you would say good-bye to her for me."

Doran said that he would, and thought the omission of Miss Fielding's name was significant.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lindley had secured a smoking compartment to himself. As he sat waiting for the train to start he remembered his keen interest in trains as a boy. Perhaps, after all, business organization might be his true line, and the one successful play a fluke. How often had he stood on the platform at Haxteth, longing to escape—to get into any train and go—anywhere. And now he was glad to get out of London, and to get back to Haxteth again, and to the impersonal comfort of many old memories and associations.

The train moved slowly forward out of the station, and Lindley, closing his eyes, could imagine that he saw Sonya standing before him again, her face upturned, her beautiful eyes sad and wet.

### BOOK III .

## CHAPTER I

### DOWN HILL

THE station fly lumbered slowly up the High Street of Haxteth. Lindley, peering out of the window, noted the few changes that the years had brought. For the most part the names on the shop-fronts were those that he had been familiar with as a boy. Posters announced a ballad concert at the town hall, tickets procurable from Miss Camp's music shop. A sky-sign exhibited in enormous letters the name "Tapton." The same name was repeated on the boards of the sandwich men at the corner. "Tapton for value. We meet your views. Largest, newest, and cheapest stock in Haxteth." Lindley read them and pondered. He knew the name—of that he felt certain. What was it that Tapton used to do? He could not remember. But apparently Tapton was going ahead.

The cab stopped at the private entrance to Walter's house. The brass plate and the bell-pull were dirty and tarnished. The door-step had not been cleaned. He had to ring three times before the door was opened. A red-headed

slut of fifteen, with her mouth full and a half-eaten apple in her hand stared at him with wonder and curiosity, as he inquired for Mr. Kays.

The girl swallowed, hastily. "In the shorp. Shorp door's next this on yer left."

"And Mrs. Kays?"

The girl grinned. "Ain't up yet. Ain't often up afore eleven."

Lindley turned to the cabman, and ordered his things to be taken into the house. Then he told the girl to go and tell Mr. Kays that his brother was here and wished to see him.

The girl looked aggrieved. "You ain't expected, yer know," she said warningly. She saw that this kind of thing was likely to make work. But she took an eager bite at her apple and two reluctant steps down the street, and in at the shop door. In a moment Walter came out of the shop, putting on his coat as he came. He had put on flesh, and looked white and unhealthy.

His manner was more cordial than usual. "Well, this is a surprise," he said, as he shook hands. "You never wrote to say you were coming."

"No," said Lindley. "I made up my mind in a bit of a hurry."

"Anyhow, I'm glad to see you, though you won't find things quite what they used to be. And what brought you to Haxteth?"

"Business, partly. I may be stopping here for some time, if I can find rooms to suit me."

"Ah!" said Walter, meditatively. "You've gone in for the writing, haven't you? I only hope it pays you better than my work pays me. Well, come along up."

He led the way up the dirty stairs into the dirty dining-room. On one end of the table the frowsy remnants of Walter's breakfast still lingered. All was disorder. Many things had been chipped or broken of late years, and nothing had been mended or replaced.

"How's Henrietta?" Lindley asked.

"She's well enough. Still in bed, and might as well stop there for all the good she is when she is up." He began to clear away the breakfast things himself. "Look at this now," he said, angrily. "Pretty, ain't it? That brute of a girl we've got now does nothing—you can't get servants nowadays. I say, Lindley, you'll have a glass of wine, won't you?"

"Bit early in the morning, isn't it?" said Lindley. Then, as he saw that a refusal would be ill taken, he added, "All right. It wouldn't be a bad thing after one's journey."

"You needn't think I do it every day," said Walter. "You may guess that when I tell you that I've not bought a single bottle since father died; nor ever had the money for it. Still, when we entertain distinguished visitors we must do our best. You can have a look at the paper while I go down to the cellar." He handed him the newspaper, with the mark of a breakfast-cup

clearly imprinted on it in brown. "Wonderful how they do these things for a halfpenny, but I dare say you know more about it than I do."

Lindley opened the paper as his brother passed out of the room. His eye was caught at once by his own name. It was a little personal paragraph of not remarkable accuracy. Lindley took out his pocket-knife, cut the paragraph out, and destroyed it. He did not want Walter to see it. His heavy questioning and insincere compliments would be unbearable. He was not in the least depressed by the general air of break-down and failure. It seemed that here he might find a quite different kind of work, something that would disconnect him from the past. The spirit of resistance was awake in him. He saw that everything was going downhill, and it pleased him to think that he might yet save the day for his father's house.

Walter returned with the decanter and glasses. "You'll find that all right," he said. "That's some of father's old brown sherry. He knew what was good, and no mistake. Well, here's a welcome, and luck to you."

"Luck to you!" Lindley echoed, as he raised his glass.

"God knows I want it!" said Walter, with fervour.

The atmosphere of the room was close and sour. Lindley got permission to open the window, and lit a cigarette. Walter took a half-

finished cigar from a vase on the mantelpiece, and re-lit it.

"I was sorry," said Lindley, "to hear from Anna that things were going badly with you."

"Well, they are—very badly. So far as I can see, I must either give up the place altogether or go bankrupt."

"What's the reason of it?"

"There's plenty of reasons—shortness of capital, competition, that swindler Frampton, a wasteful fool of a wife, and bad luck generally."

"But how did it all begin?"

"It began when father died. You know what his will was."

"I knew that everything was left to you and Anna—quite rightly, I think."

"Well, that brings me to my first mistake. I could have kept her money in the business, or I was free to buy her out by instalments. Business was very good just then, and I didn't want any interference. You know what Anna is—if her money had been left in, she would have wanted to know everything that was going on. Anyhow, I bought her out, and, as it happened, I was a fool. The instalments should have been spread over a longer period; but that was none of my arranging. As it was, before the last instalment was paid, I had begun to feel the pinch. Business was going down then, and I got very short. I was all behind with my wholesale people, and I had to dun old customers who were as safe as a church.

Then competition came along. I suppose you saw Mr. Tapton's name everywhere as you drove here?"

"I did, and now I remember it. He was with father, wasn't he?"

"Of course he was, and owed everything to him. That was a dirty trick."

"But Tapton must have started with far less capital than you. It looks as if he'd pushed, and you'd sat down. One must go ahead or get left in business nowadays."

"I don't know how you come to be an authority on it. Going ahead, indeed! That's what I'm always reading about in the papers. Why, it was that which helped to do for me. Listen. I started a big department for silver and plated goods, and old Engelstein didn't like it."

"Engelstein?"

"Yes, the silversmith in the market-place, and a pretty warm man too. I only wish I'd got half his property in Haxteth; he might have retired years ago if he'd liked. One night I was talking to Tapton, and he as good as told me that he thought my new department a mistake. I didn't want any of his damned impertinence, and I told him so. Without any more to-do he gave me notice, and I told him he could go at once if he liked. That very evening the blackguard went over to Engelstein, and was with him for a couple of hours—I found out all about that.

And it wasn't long before I found out what they had been talking about. The very next morning old Engelstein was bragging to his friends that if Mr. Walter Kays was so fond of competition he should have some. Why, that big shop that Tapton's got belongs to Engelstein. Engelstein took and lent that pauper money at two and a half, with no security. It was like a bit of madness, and all to spite me. (This is my freehold, and I can sell what I like, can't I?) People got talking about the connection between Tapton and Engelstein, till the beggars pretty well got Engelstein's credit behind him in Haxteth. What chance had I?"

"You had only got a business to keep, and they'd got a business to make."

"I know. I laughed at them myself at first; but they've made me laugh the other side of my mouth now. Tapton's had a splendid position, and a big, new, well-fitted, modern shop. I don't know when our front was painted last, but it's a good many years. And I've no money to throw away on decorating. Then Tapton had got a brand-new stock, and could deal with what manufacturers he liked. Do you think I can? Not me. I'm behindhand with my people, and if I went anywhere else they'd soon put the screw on. They're old-fashioned; they won't make what the public wants; but if I bought as much as a mouse-trap from any other firm they'd have me ruined. Then Tapton had wormed

himself into the good graces of some of my customers, and he took them with him. I'd offended others by asking for my money, and they went too. And what's the good of mincing matters? You can buy things there that you can't buy here; and the things that you can buy here, you can buy cheaper there. I own up to it. They'll sell under cost sooner than not undersell. There's not enough business for two places like his and mine in Haxteth; and what there is he's got. The farmers don't come here as they used to do. Some of them are ruined, and the rest have all got to be so scientific. They must have the very latest, you know—patent American machines, and things I never heard the name of. So that's how it is. Last Saturday night we didn't take enough to pay for the gas we burned."

"Then you should burn more gas," said Lindley.

"That's not very good sense. That's making bad worse."

"We'll talk about that later. Now, what about Tapton himself?"

"Wears a frockcoat, and holds his head up, and smiles. He can afford it. He's got no one to keep but himself. He don't smoke and don't drink, and lives on half nothing. Pretty well every penny he makes out of the business goes back into it again. He's all push and advertising, and he works a sight harder for himself than he ever did for us."



"That's not unnatural, when you come to think about it. And what are your own plans?"

"Got none. I just go on from day to day, doing the best I can, and knowing it's no good. You can't fight against luck. Sometimes I talk things over with Henrietta, but it only ends in her grumbling at me. If I sold everything I've got in the world, I doubt if there would be a couple of hundred left after my debts were paid. Then I might get a post as manager." ;

"No, you mightn't. If you can't manage your own business, people won't want you to manage theirs. What was that you said about Frampton?"

"I wish to goodness you wouldn't ask me. Mind, I was no worse than others. Everybody believed in him. And I only lost a hundred, while others lost everything. We had a couple of suicides here in one day after he'd gone. What maddens me is that it was the very day before he bolted. He was in here, and he began telling a long story. It was an industrial, and was to double in value in a week. He was putting a thousand into it himself, so he told me. He got my cheque for a hundred, and made a favour of taking it. 'Make it open,' he says, 'for I shall want about that much in cash this afternoon. I've got to pay a blackguard to go out of England and leave a woman alone. We lawyers see some queer things, and in respectable families too.' He went straight to the bank with it, and next

morning he did his bunk. Oh, I'm sick of talking about it all! We're a lively lot in Haxteth! What about yourself now? What business can you have here?"

Lindley rose. "In the first place," he said, "I'm going to break Tapton."

"What, you! How?"

"We'll talk about it this evening. I'm going over to the 'Lion' now, and I shall stop there to-night. But I'll come in to supper, and after a day or two (when you've got this place clean, and found some decent servants) I shall probably want to live here. I'll take the rooms that Aunt Emmeline used to have, and I'll pay for them. You can tell me to-night if that idea suits you."

"Of course it suits us, though you'll find things in a bit of a muddle."

"Then they'll have to get out of the muddle. Have my things sent over, will you? At nine to-night, then."

He picked up his hat and went out. For a moment or two Walter sat in silence, utterly astonished and perplexed. Then he went to the door and called loudly—

"Henrietta!"

CHAPTER II  
LINDLEY LEADS

**H**ENRIETTA put her florid, comely, and incapable head over the bannisters.

"What's up now?" she said. She spoke somewhat thickly from the fact that she had two hairpins in her mouth. She had been putting the last touches to her canary-coloured hair when her husband called her.

"Come down here," called Walter, "and I'll tell you."

She came slithering into the room in loose slippers. She kicked them off, and stretched her tattered toes to the fire.

"You've got a rare old smell of smoke here," she said.

"Who do you think's been here?" Walter asked.

"How should I know? I could hear the voice as I was finishing my hair, and I knew you'd got somebody. I suppose it's another of them that want their money. Little did I think when I married you that I'd got this kind of thing ahead of me."

"It was Lindley," said Walter.

"I thought he was too much of a swell to care about seeing his poor relations. Barely civil is all he's ever been to me, and if he thinks I'm going to——"

"Oh, hold your row, and don't talk like a fool! There's a chance here. He's got money, and all of a sudden my lord has begun to take no end of an interest in the shop. He may stop here for some time. He may take the rooms that were Aunt Emmeline's, and he'll pay for them. But he says the house is dirty, and that your servant is a slut. That's quite true. You'll have to get the place clean, and you'll have to get a decent girl in. Also you'll have to do a bit of work yourself, and not lie in bed half the day, as you do now. Lindley's no fool, and he won't stop here unless the place is made to suit him. D'you see all that?"

"Oh, go on talking!" said Henrietta, bitterly.

"I particularly want him to stop here. He's told me what he intends to do, and I'm not going to repeat it to you. But if he can pull that off, it'll do us a lot of good. You'll have money to spend again, and another servant, and comforts that you don't get now. If, through your fault, I lose this last chance, I swear to God I'll leave you!"

"I don't know why you need come using your filthy language to me," said Henrietta. "I always said that if we took a lodger things

would have to be very different. When's he coming?"

"He'll be in to supper to-night, to have a business chat with me afterwards. But he's stopping at the Lion. I think he would come in as soon as you'd got things right for him. When'll that be?"

"It would have been long ago, only you always fly out so if I get a woman in, and ask you for an extra shilling or two."

"Never mind that," said Walter. "You can have what money you want. You might get this room more decent by to-night. Go ahead. I've got to get back to the shop."

Henrietta meditated on this changed condition of affairs when her husband had gone. She disliked Lindley at present, always did her best to speak sneeringly of him, and was most ardently anxious to have his good opinion.

"Well," said Walter that night, as they all sat down to supper together. "What have you been doing with yourself all day?"

Lindley laughed. "I've been looking into Tapton's shop windows, and asking a few questions and doing a few sums. But principally I have been to sleep. I was travelling all night, you know."

Henrietta observed that some could sleep in the train and some couldn't. She herself was one of those who couldn't. Walter added that she managed to sleep pretty well everywhere else.

Then Lindley began to devote himself to Henrietta. He complimented her, and was respectful, and was deeply interested in her. He hoped that it would not be inconvenient for her to have him as a lodger. He did not say a word of the conditions which he had laid down. He had settled, as a definite policy, that everything unpleasant should be said to Walter only. Henrietta was gracious. She had had poor health lately, and a very bad servant. Things were by no means as she liked them. She had been telling Walter in the morning that she could not dream of having Lindley there until they had got a new servant and the place was in order again. Before the end of supper she had changed her mind about Lindley. He was good-looking, and any polite attention to her had the charm of novelty. She and Walter rarely quarrelled, but frequently bickered. He was fond of her in a way; but he took no trouble about her, and she took none about him. She went to bed at ten that night, and left the two men together.

"Well," said Walter, "what are you going to do?"

"Have you got your books there?" asked Lindley.

"No; they're in my office. You can see them to-morrow, if you like. I can tell you roughly how we stand now."

Lindley heard the statement. It was rather

better than he had expected. He made no comment on it.

"I've been thinking," he said, "about Engelstein. I've seen him and talked to him; in fact, I bought a little watch there as a present for Henrietta. It's being engraved."

"Considering," said Walter, "that I've taken the utmost care not to spend one farthing with him for years, and that he's conspired with Tapton to ruin me, I think you might have taken your custom elsewhere."

"Think so?" said Lindley. "Well, I've got enough money to cover all your present liabilities, and I can afford to lend it for a year or two without interest. But I'm not going to do it unless you'll listen to reason, and work the thing my own way. I don't want to appear in it at all. I don't want my name mentioned. You can say I'm here for rest and quiet. You can say anything you like. But if I put down this money, I do it because I'm betting on myself, not because I'm betting on you. You will help, of course. In fact, you'll do most of the work; but it'll have to be on my lines."

"I'm always willing to listen to reason," said Walter. "I know you're the clever one of the family, of course. Still, my business experience goes for something."

"It does," said Lindley, "and I shan't forget it. Now we'll begin, I think, with Engelstein as our chief point of difference. I don't believe

that Engelstein ever lent Tapton money without security at two and a half."

"It's common talk."

"It's common nonsense. Engelstein thought you had poached on his preserves, and he didn't like it. It was not natural that he would. He was glad of a chance to hit back; but you may be sure he has secured himself. If Tapton began to go down, the rat would leave the sinking ship at once, more especially if you do as I tell you. And by all the means in your power put an end to Engelstein's animosity, and get him well disposed towards you. Did your silver and plated goods department do any good?"

"It looked like it at first, but it's fallen off a good deal now—but, then, everything has fallen off. The real fact is, that I've hardly got any stock."

"Right," said Lindley. "Then to-morrow you'll call on Engelstein, and tell him that you think that department was a mistake, that you've stopped it, and that he can buy what's left of your stock at his own price."

"That means you want me to start by making another loss."

"Certainly. You'll have to give the stuff away, pretty nearly. But there'll be a gain as well. Engelstein will feel that he has chastised you, and that you've repented."

"You're asking me to put myself in a pretty humiliating position."



"It's not so humiliating as bankruptcy. But you can brag a little to Engelstein if you like. You can say you want the room that this department took up—all the room you can get, and more too. Wear good clothes when you go to see him, and, above all things, look happy. Your face, as it has been to-day, is enough to bring all your creditors on you in a rush. I'll go on to some of the next steps. You will pay off your present wholesale people at once. As soon as you do that, they'll be down on their knees to you, and if you get anything from them at all, it'll be on much better terms than at present. Then one day next week you and I must go up to London. I know pretty well what Tapton's got, and he hasn't got everything. You must have your shop re-painted and decorated, and as soon as you've got anything to advertise, you must advertise it."

"It sounds very nice ; but it all means money. Are you remembering that ?"

"Of course I am. When you told me that you didn't take enough on Saturday night to pay for the gas you burn, I said that you should burn more gas. If you want to take money out you must put money in. It's true that I told you that I meant to smash Tapton ; but I don't propose to lose a single penny over doing it, any more than I suppose that Engelstein proposes to lose a penny on backing him. Under-selling and large advertising must have made a

good big hole in the capital that Engelstein and his friends—for I expect it's a syndicate—have put down. And I don't suppose that at present much has come back. It would come back, of course, if you were not in a position to show fight, and went under. But as things are, I think it's a particularly happy time for you to make your move. Tapton is not suspecting that your business has received large additional capital and some additional enterprise, and I should say that he has got within sight of the end of his string. When he tries to meet your new expenditure and your new lines with new lines and new expenditure on his own part, he may possibly find that there is no more string at all."

"What new line had you thought about?"

"Motors. You must have an agency. You must sell petrol and accessories. You must have a man here who can do all repairs. You can start a garage. Tapton has got a better frontage, but he's not nearly so deep as your place is. You will be able to utilize the room you've got."

"I hate motors," said Walter. "Stink-pots I call them."

"You can go on hating them. You can go on calling them any fancy name you like; but the world won't stop because you say 'Woa!' Three of those stink-pots went past your shop this morning. There's one of them stranded in the stables of the Lion now, and its owner damning

because he's got to send seven miles to get a gallon of petrol. There's money in selling motors if you get the chance, and you ought to make the chance. Show those enterprising farmers you talked to me about the cheapest way to get their stuff to market. You won't make a fortune by selling a penn'orth of tin-tacks now and again. Who did the painting and decorating for Tapton, by the way?"

"I don't know—not local people. He'd got to have all the latest ideas, of course."

"I'm glad to hear that. He's not made any friends that way. You will employ local people exclusively, and if you can manage to give a little bit to three or four different firms it will be all the better. What are the local papers here now?"

"There are two. The *Haxteth News*, which is a new daily, and not much thought of, and the old *Haxteth Times*, which comes out every Saturday."

"Does Tapton advertise in them?"

Almost every week he has something. When he first started he would often take a half page."

"That's all right. When you've arranged about the painters and decorators to-morrow, go over to their offices and book full pages for the whole week before Christmas—that'll be seven full pages in all."

"Christmas? That's two months ahead."

"It is just about then that you'll want the

advertising; in fact, you'll have to hurry everybody up no end to be ready for it by then. There's a good deal more to say, and there are lots of details to arrange. But I've given you enough for one night."

"Well," said Walter, thoughtfully, "you're making it a very much bigger thing than I had expected."

"I suppose so," said Lindley. "There are two ways of getting money—you must save it or you must spend in order to make it. You've begun the wrong end, that's all. Once we get a real business moving around here, I shall want you to see that it runs as economically as possible. Then your knowledge of the details will come in. I'm only giving you general ideas."

"You are also speculating with a good deal of your money. I suppose you writing chaps make it pretty easily."

"We don't; and for that reason I don't mean to lose what I've got. I shan't lose it if you'll carry out my plans and work hard at furthering them to the uttermost."

Walter thought it over for a minute or two. "The man who pays the piper, as they say, has got a right to call the tune. You've got ideas that I've never had, but I shan't let that stand against them. I'll do the best I can on your lines." He paused, seemed embarrassed, and took a drink of his weak whisky-and-water. "I haven't said much to you about thanks," he began.



"I don't want them," said Lindley. "Perhaps I'm not here to help you, but to break Tapton. And perhaps it's not so much that I want to break Tapton as that any kind of a fight suits me just now, and—well, I won't go into it. I shall be over here early to-morrow to settle more of the details with you. Good night."

Walter let him out, and, returning to the dining-room, began to put out the gas.

"By Jove ;" he said to himself, "how that chap has changed !"

## CHAPTER III

### ENGELSTEIN

"IT'S my belief," said Engelstein, "that you've had too much freedom already."

Tapton smiled nervously. "One had to get the trade, you know. I said I could do it, though I never said I could do it for nothing. You can trust to me. Kays is beaten. The syndicate will make its profits fast enough in a few months' time. It isn't as if you couldn't afford to wait."

"Perhaps I can," said Engelstein. "But you and I aren't the whole syndicate. The parson's very nervous—comes and drives me crazy with his questions. What he'll say when he finds that at the end of the year there is no dividend for him I don't like to think. What do you mean by saying Kays is beaten?"

"Well, he came to you to get rid of the rest of his plated stock. It looks as if he were beginning to back out of the whole thing. Besides, we know we've got all his trade."

"Quite so," said Engelstein. "And it's cost us so much to get it that I don't see how we can keep it, unless we increase the capital. And,

mind you, I've set my limit over this. As for Kays selling me that stock, it seemed to me a sign that he was coming to his senses. If he's broken, what's he having his place painted and done up for?"

Tapton looked surprised. "He isn't, is he?"

"The men began work on it to-day. It's the same firm that works for me. And I went round to see old Edwards about it. I can tell you the thing is going to be done well; and, what's more, when I gave Edwards a hint that he'd better look after his money he laughed at me. He was asked to estimate for cash payment."

"I suppose," said Tapton, bitterly, "it never occurred to you that the place is his own freehold, and that mortgagees sometimes foreclose, and that you can get a better price for a place that looks smart than one that looks dirty. Besides, new paint covers over a good many things."

Engelstein stared at him grimly. He did not expect Tapton to call him 'sir'; but he did not like his present way of speaking. Tapton saw that he did not like it.

"Look here," he went on, "I don't want to speak offensively; but you chaps do worry one so. I've got enough real worries in the business itself without hunting for them and inventing them. I don't see that anybody would have a right to expect the business to be showing much profit yet. But it'll come. Why can't you trust

me, and leave my hands free? The business is bound to come."

"Mr. Tapton," said Engelstein, quietly, "I will give you my views in a very few words. One may pay too much for anything. The entire trade in a business like yours in Haxteth is worth a certain amount, and no more. I am not sure that you haven't paid too much for it; and, unless the capital of the syndicate is increased, I'm not sure that you'll be able to keep it. I shan't put down another penny myself; and, as you take my observations in such ill-temper, I will remind you that I am much the biggest holder, and that you are much the least, and that I can next March give the rest of the syndicate the option of buying me out or having the whole thing closed."

Tapton was very apologetic. He had meant to show no ill-temper; he thought the fact was that he had been working too hard, and his nerves had gone.

"That's all right," said Engelstein, placidly; "I merely wanted you to understand. Now, then, have a whisky-and-soda before you go."

"You forget," Tapton began hesitatingly.

"Yes, yes," said Engelstein; "a teetotaller, of course. Well, I'm not."

Long after Tapton had gone Engelstein sat sipping his whisky, and thinking over the situation. He did not quite like it. There were signs of activity in the enemy's camp. Tapton



had undoubtedly been splashing the money about too much, and might have to slow down just at the time when extra speed was wanted. And why did he talk about his nerves? Business men have got no use for them. Engelstein shook his head. Tapton was a hard worker, absorbed modern ideas easily, and had certainly backed himself with every penny he possessed. But it occurred to Engelstein that Tapton was not a strong man. If Tapton had turned on him, and had really lost his temper and sworn at him with great force and variety, Engelstein would really have been better pleased.

As the days went on Engelstein's anxiety increased. It was evident to him that Walter Kays had now got somebody behind him, and was being pushed along pretty fast. The decorations were finished.

"Seen them?" snapped Engelstein to Tapton. "When a man paints a place in order to sell it he paints his own name on it, doesn't he? You're too clever!"

Every day big crates and packages seemed to arrive at Kays' shop. Engelstein in passing noticed two new assistants, younger and smarter-looking men. The shop at night was brilliantly lit, and was lit by electricity. There was no electric lighting company in Haxteth, and only a few of the bigger houses had their private installations. This was duly rubbed into Tapton, and he was goaded to wrath again.

"Why didn't I think of it when we started? I did think of it. I thought of that, and I thought of the motors, and as you have built the place, and own it, I should think you might be able to see for yourself why nothing could be done. There's no room. It looks a big shop; but the damned thing's all frontage. I haven't even got room for the lines I'm running at present. If you want to blame anybody about that, blame yourself for not having built the place deeper."

"I couldn't get the land," said Engelstein. "We needn't talk about blaming anybody. What we've got to do is to face the situation. We started in by putting Kays right out of date. He took it lying down, and went from bad to worse. Now he's suddenly awake again, and he has found capital somehow or other, and he has put us out of date. Well, it's our turn to play next. What are you going to do?"

"Well," said Tapton, "I've got some very good lines for this Christmas—stuff that'll sell like hot cakes, and bring a good profit. Come down to the shop to-night, and I'll show you."

Engelstein went and approved. He even suggested himself that Tapton had better book half the *Haxteth Times'* front page for Christmas week. Tapton attempted to do so, and found that the whole of that front page was already booked to his rival.

At Christmas Sir Charles Amadel gave his wife a motor-car. It was a big and expensive

car, and it was Walter Kays who sold it to him. The patronage of the Hall, which had ebbed away to Tapton, swung back to the other side of the street again. A big brewery in the neighbourhood began to make calculations. They had been having bad luck with their horses, and in any case it looked as if a steam-lorry might save money. They asked Walter Kays and his engineer to assist in the calculations.

Three days before Christmas Day the syndicate met, and lost their tempers with one another.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN OFFER

THE spring sunlight streamed through the open windows of the sitting-room which had been Aunt Emmeline's, and was now Lindley's. The piano had gone, and an American desk had taken its place. The pictures had gone too. Lindley felt himself unable to examine the figures of an estimate under the eyes of the sentimental choir-boys, or the puppy whose playfulness was even more painful. Everywhere there was a methodical disorder of trade papers, catalogues, specifications, files, ledgers. There had been much work done in that room during the last few months, and now the victory was practically won. And with it many changes had taken place.

Henrietta was Henrietta still, and would be to the end of the chapter; but she had changed, and was changing. She had never heard directly from Lindley that he disapproved of anything she said or did. He was always kind to her, and gave her many presents. He was the bringer of prosperity, and she had the greatest belief in

him. Any opinion that he enunciated she was ready to profess as her own the next minute; and before the day was out she really had adopted it, and was acting upon it. She even surprised herself by forming the habit of thanking servants who did anything for her. Lindley could be exceedingly rude, and sometimes was; but it was never unintentional. He was very plain-spoken with Walter, and yet the two never really quarrelled.

Prosperity suited Walter, and, strangely enough, the motor business suited him. He had always had a feeling for right construction, and for things that would really work. Lindley remembered with amusement Walter's opinion of a beautiful cathedral that he had been taken to see.

"That kind of thing," he said, "makes me angry. They go and clap on a roof too heavy for the walls, and as the walls would bulge out they have to stick on these things."

Lindley pointed out that the flying buttresses were an integral part of the design.

"Don't tell me that," said Walter, bitterly.

And he regarded the cathedral with the same distaste that he did a repair which could only be temporary, and would probably be inefficient, in a worn-out lawn-mower from the hall. His prejudice against motor-cars had been merely a matter of ignorance. He was now keenly interested, and not less so because the motor

department was now promising to become many times the most important and remunerative part of the business.

Lindley lay back in the rocking-chair which had been Aunt Emmeline's, smoked interminable cigarettes, and wondered what he was to do next. This stupid struggle between two rival shops in a provincial town had, he reflected, interested him profoundly. He had been able to forget in it his past and his future, to concentrate himself always upon the next move in the game. But there were plentiful signs that the game was almost over now. What was he to do next? He did not want to return to London. There was no chance of his meeting Sonya there. Sir Charles and Lady Mariland had left for Egypt in the previous December, immediately after their marriage. In the spring they were to go on to Italy, and afterwards Mrs. Lockett was to join them in Switzerland. But though he would not meet her, he would meet much that would inevitably remind him of her. Of her alone he would gladly have been reminded, if it had not also brought back to his mind the awful and perhaps fruitless sacrifice that she now made of her perfect self. Of late he had let his literary work for the *English Review* slide, and his correspondence with Doran had always been brief, and now was infrequent. It seemed best to him just to wait on at Haxteth, and see if anything else happened which could interest him. After

all, he was not an exigent specialist. He recalled and could quite understand his youthful passion for railway systems. Anything which required construction and careful arrangement would do. The writing of a play and the managing of a shop had been of almost equal interest to him. On the whole, perhaps, the shop, involving as it did some idea of a contest, had proved the more exciting. He could not think that anything now would matter very much, unless he could meet some woman who would make him forget Sonya. His spirits, which had been high at the height of the struggle, had fallen persistently now that success was in sight. Walter noticed it, and spoke of it to Henrietta.

"He's a chap," said Walter, "that has got to do everything contrariways. When there was a good sporting chance that he would drop thousands over this, he was all smiles. And now that we are going full steam ahead, and nothing in the way, you can hardly get a word out of him."

"You don't know how to take him," said Henrietta. "I'm sure he's always nice enough with me."

After dinner that night Lindley went back to his own room. More often he would remain in the drawing-room, whither Aunt Emmeline's piano had been moved, and make some music. His moderate abilities and qualifications in that way were an eternal miracle to Henrietta. To-night he wanted to be alone, to go on with the

train of thought which had been haunting him all day—to think what he was to do next. He re-read the letter that Sonya had written to him on the eve of her wedding. It said only that she had written many letters and could not send them to him, and this was only to pray him to remember his promise to her. "I dare not even hope that I shall one day forget you," the letter ended.

The door opened and Walter came in. He closed the door softly behind him, and looked mysterious and excited.

"I say, can you spare a few minutes?" he said.

"Yes, yes," said Lindley, impatiently. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter—at least, nothing's the matter with us. But I've got Mr. Tapton in the dining-room downstairs."

"Good Lord!" Lindley exclaimed.

"Sneaked across as soon as it was dark. He's been talking away by the yard."

"And what have you said?" asked Lindley, sharply.

"Nothing," said Walter, quietly; "not a thing. I told him I had others to consider, and he must wait."

"He knows my position here?"

"He's got a very good idea of it. Engelstein tumbles to things very quickly, and Engelstein must have spoken to him about it."



"Does he know you're with me now?"

"I should think he suspects it. I made an excuse of letters for the post."

"Very well," said Lindley. "I should like to hear what he has to say. Is it an understood thing that I do the talking, and you do the agreeing? It won't be made obvious to Tapton, of course."

"Then I don't mind. There is only one point I insist on. He is trying for a partnership. I won't have him."

"Nor would I," said Lindley. "In fact, I don't think there is any danger that we shall disagree."

Mr. Tapton rose from his seat as the two brothers entered the dining-room. He looked worried, but energetic.

"You remember my brother?" said Walter.

"Very well, sir. Pleased to see you back in Haxteth."

"Thank you," said Lindley, as he sat down and began to roll a cigarette.

"My brother is with me in this business," said Walter. "You can tell him what you began to tell me. Then we shall come to our decision."

"Well," said Tapton, "I'm going to be quite frank. I'm going to put my cards on the table."

Lindley nodded.

"I think it's time that this underselling, throat-cutting business was stopped. It's really beginning at the end of what I had to say; but what's wanted is an amalgamation. It'd mean

money all round. These premises could be given up entirely to the motor business. There's a talk in Haxteth that you are thinking of bringing out your own car. Any way, a man with eyes in his head can see that this side of your business is making strides. With yourselves controlling the motor side, and myself running the shop down the street, and with no competition, the profits would be worth thinking about." He looked round for approval, and found none. "Eh?" he said nervously.

"Profits are always worth thinking about," said Lindley, judicially. "May I ask if you are a principal?"

"In a sense I am. I've got three hundred in the business, and I'm the manager of it."

"But there are others with you?"

"It's a syndicate. Mr. Engelstein is the biggest holder. Then there's Mr. Theodore Gold, Rector at Penfold."

The two brothers looked at one another. "Ah," said Lindley, meditatively.

"Then there's Somers and Cartwright, and both the Robinsons and——"

"All right," said Lindley. "You needn't bother to give the whole list. Are you authorized by them to come and make proposals to us?"

Tapton leaned forward in his chair. "That's just it," he said. "I am not authorized. If they knew I were here I believe they'd kill me as soon as I got out. Suppose I'm willing to put

them in the cart? That sounds pretty bad, I dare say. Perhaps you don't know what it is to be a manager with a nominally free hand ; and to have the men who ought to trust you worrying you day and night, finding fault with everything you've done, even when it's the very thing they advised themselves, making suggestions, doing things behind your back, and, generally speaking, driving you mad. You don't know what that is."

"I can imagine," said Lindley, "that it must be a trying position."

"Very trying indeed, sir. Well, Engelstein is calling his money in. Either the rest of the syndicate find it, or we shut down and make what we can for the stock and goodwill. That would be a ruinous loss for all of us. I take it, it rests entirely with me which we do. Engelstein thinks we can't find the money ; but I know better. Mr. Gold has friends in the peerage. He's told me so himself. The others are mostly business men, who would sooner put a little more in than stand to lose nearly all they've put in already. It depends on the way I put things to them whether they go on or whether they stop ; and I needn't remind you that you don't want them to go on. I'll go a step further. If the thing is closed I can get it for you as cheap as you like. These things are easily worked ; and I'm ready to do it for a partnership agreement." He flung himself back in his chair again, and waited for Lindley to speak. As Lindley

said nothing, he resumed: "You've got no friends in the syndicate. Members of your family have no reason to be particularly tender to the parson at——"

"Stop there," said Lindley. "We will talk business, please. The personal affairs of this family are not your business."

"Perhaps, then," said Tapton, "you'll let me say a word of my own personal affairs. I was a faithful servant of your father, and of Mr. Walter after him, for many years. I lost my head one afternoon, and said I'd go. Mind you, I was sorry for it the moment after I'd done it. That very night I thought of asking to be taken back."

"Let's see," said Lindley to Walter, "that was the night he went up to Engelstein's, wasn't it?"

Walter nodded. He could not prevent a grin of sardonic satisfaction. Lindley's face, on the other hand, was perfectly impassive.

"That's quite true," said Tapton. "I was a poor man, and I'd got to take any chance I could. I thought of asking to be taken back ; but I knew Mr. Walter was a man of his word. What had I got to offer then ? Nothing. Now it's a very different tale. I've got everything to offer. You needn't think we're done across the street. I've got plenty of customers there, and good customers too, who'll stick to me wherever I am."

"In the event of our declining this partnership," said Lindley, "what would happen ?"

"That I can't say precisely. It's just possible my business might be turned over to some new people with plenty of push, and you'd have all this cut-throat competition over again; or we might go on. And if we do, I can tell you plainly that I've got one or two little things up my sleeve yet."

"I should imagine so," said Lindley. "Some of the cards you forgot to put on the table." He turned to Walter. "We have quite decided, I think," he said.

"Quite," said Walter. He rubbed his fat hands together cheerfully. He was enjoying this.

"Well, then, Mr. Tapton," said Lindley, "you were a servant, more or less faithful, for some years. I promise you that shall not be forgotten. You did your best to ruin us, and at one time you seemed rather like doing it. Things are changed now, and you are ready to come back to us; and you offer as an inducement your dirty and probably criminal treachery to the other members of your syndicate. We will have nothing whatever to do with you. If your business goes on, or if it is transferred to others, it will make no difference to us whatever. All I can say is, that when you have lost your money and your employment you may come back here, and we will consider the question of taking you on again at a reduced salary. This is merely because you are an old servant of my father's. Otherwise——"

Tapton had risen to his feet, white with rage. "I'm not going to be spoken to like that," he said, "by any God-damned Kays on the face of——"

"One moment," said Lindley. "If you make a noise, or become offensive, you will be put out."

Tapton stared round the room, helplessly. "All I can say is," he said, "that you've quite misunderstood me. I never intended anything but strictly honourable business. However, as I told you, I've something up my sleeve."

"And," added Lindley, as he handed it to him, "this is your hat, I think."

## CHAPTER V

### NEWS FROM EGYPT

“WELL,” said Mr. Graves, “old Hartingwell is sinking fast, so the papers say.”

“Don’t!” said Doran. “You make me feel like a vulture watching a dying camel. And it’s quite unfair that I should feel like that, because, of course, I would sooner wait for a General Election.”

“At the same time, your people are prepared for an immediate fight, I hope?”

“Quite so,” said Doran. “Our organization is good, and has been very busy; whereas the other side is remarkably slack. They consider the south-west division is a stronghold, and feel secure. They forget how beastly unpopular poor old Hartingwell has been making himself all over the place.”

“Very likely,” said Graves; “but it’s not Hartingwell that you’ll have to fight. It’s quite probable his death is coming up on the tape downstairs now.”

“I wouldn’t stir from my chair to look,” said Doran. “I wouldn’t even take the trouble to

send a waiter. For goodness' sake, Graves, don't make me too indecent just at the start of a promising political career."

"All I wanted to point out is that his constituents may be sick with Hartingwell; but it doesn't follow that the constituency is sick with his party, and is prepared for the first time for ages to swing round to the other side."

"I know that," said Doran. "I didn't expect a safe seat to be given me, and I know this one is rather a forlorn hope. Still, you'll see, we shall make a fight of it; and if I'm beaten I'll have another try as soon as I feel rich enough."

"Good," said Graves. "By the way, have you heard anything from Egypt?"

"Not a line."

"Nor I; and I don't like it. Sonya married this man in December. They were to have returned from Egypt at the beginning of April, and to have met Sarah in Rome for Easter. That was all arranged. Halfway through February Sarah Lockett gets a cable—shuts her flat, flies off to Egypt at once, and gives her oldest friends no better explanation than that the arrangements have been modified. What does it mean?"

"We both know what it means," said Doran.

"I will admit that I have my fears," said Graves.

"Oh, we may as well speak plainly. Sir Charles Mariland has started drinking again.



And God help that poor child who married him to reclaim him! It was bound to happen so. She was never in love with him. I still think she was in love with Lindley Kays, though I have some reason to believe that he, not knowing of her engagement to Sir Charles, proposed and was refused. She would do her duty to the utmost. She would make Sir Charles a charming companion; but sooner or later he would find out. A man can't help finding it out. Up to the moment of marriage he may have thought that here at least was strong affection, and that marriage would convert it into something stronger still. Why, if I read the case right, Sonya's marriage must have been one long horror to her. When he realized it, it would be something of a shock to him. He hasn't got the temperament for it. You know how it was when he was in the diplomatic, doing brilliant work, and on the verge of doing more brilliant things still." Doran paused and snapped his fingers. "And he went out suddenly, like that."

"Let me see," said Graves; "it was just after that that he met Sonya."

"It was. From his point of view alone it looked like a success. Even if Sonya had never met Lindley, I believe that man could never have made her happy; and, to speak bluntly, I should not care to see children of his race. But from his point of view it was all right. He lived chiefly a quiet life in the country, and had nothing to

upset him. He really adored Sonya. He got the better of what is, I suppose, his congenital curse. But a breakdown was bound to come. You can't avoid stress in this life, and stress finds out the weak point."

"I can only say," said Graves, "that I hope your theory is wrong. But, remember, the girl's got indomitable pluck. She won't leave him; she won't let go for one failure—no, nor for twenty. The pity of it is that one so young, so beautiful in mind and body, should have to be sacrificed for rescue work."

Doran rose from his chair, and stood with his back to the fire.

"Don't talk about it," he said. "The whole thing makes me sick. Do you know I myself strongly and seriously advised Lindley Kays to run away with Sonya?"

"It was not bad advice," said Graves.

"I thought so at the time, but now I'm not sure of it. In these matters it is better for the third party to say and to do nothing. 'It's an awkward business to play with souls, and matter enough to save one's own.' By talking I made Lindley think the thing over in cold blood. If circumstances had brought the moment without time for reflection he might have done it. Sonya would have been married to him, and by this time Sir Charles would have drunk himself to death or into an asylum. And I should have been glad of it."

"But would Sonya?" asked Graves. "Did she seem to you the kind of girl who could be happy under conditions like that?"

Doran thought it over. "Yes," he admitted; "that's true enough."

The little clock on the mantelpiece struck ten. Mr. Graves rose from his place. He was getting older, and his doctors had been more insistent of late on regular habits and the avoidance of late hours.

"Good night, Doran," he said. "This is about the time they pack me off to bed nowadays. Don't you come down with me. If there's any news of Hartingwell in the hall, perhaps I'll come back and let you know."

When Graves had left him Doran sat down again and re-filled his pipe. The bye-election for south-west Breakshire had of late occupied his mind almost entirely. He had very little hope of success, but every intention of making the best fight possible. As he sat there, deep in thought, he felt himself touched on the shoulder. Graves stood there with his overcoat on and his hat in his hand.

"Well?" said Doran.

"I have news," said Graves. "Sir Charles Mariland is dead. He died at Halfa. The news came while we were at dinner."

CHAPTER VI  
ON THE NILE

THE women came along the river front, their jars on their heads. The great tourist steamer, flashing with electric lights, came slowly up to the landing-stage. It was in the country where the old and the new meet; where you may see by the riverside a nude bronze man working the same stupid irrigating machine that was in use here thousands of years before Christ was born, and at a stone's throw you may get your photograph of him developed while you wait. Here the newest hotels and the oldest temples lie side by side. Here, during the winter months, the hands of the native are ever outstretched, as they were outstretched now to the crowd of tourists that poured from the boat. He comes, this patient tourist, English or American, with money in his hand, and a thirst for "anteeker," and all Luxor is glad and ready to give it him. A scarab or a figurine of Pasht, a mummied cat or a cornelian necklace, Sudanese arms, manufactured out of Standard Oil tins somewhere at the back of a bazaar, girdles of beads and

shells, supposed, one hopes inaccurately, to be the entire costume of Nubian ladies—these things await him all along the Nile. I do not know what Egypt does in the summer-time—I fancy it sits indoors and manufactures “anteeker.”

Lady Mariland's *dahabeeah* lay beyond the Dutchman's Castle in a quiet spot by itself. Here, as night fell, the quiet was intense. After dinner the two women stole on the upper deck together. It was covered in with an awning of Eastern carpets, and lit with the most occidental of lamps. Both women were in white. Sir Charles Mariland had insisted upon that. He detested mourning. Besides, in that wild spot where, a month ago, they had laid him, there were no dressmakers to mitigate a woman's affliction. Now that the struggle was all over, and he was laid to rest, and there was no more to be done, a strange feeling of peace and rest had come over both the women. This journey back had for Sonya none of the horror that had been hers on her way up the Nile. The women rarely spoke of Sir Charles. It had been agreed between them that they must forget the past, and look only forward. But to-night Sarah Lockett suddenly broke the silence as they sat together with one of the curtains drawn back, watching the distant lights.

“I am glad he is dead,” said Sarah Lockett, sadly and deliberately.

Sonya put her hand on Sarah's. "Don't!" she said in a stifled whisper.

"What is the good? It's the truth. I sacrificed you for him, and it was all in vain."

"Don't remind me that I failed," said Sonya. "I should have gone on—things would have got better. I don't want to give up my habit of always hoping. Don't let me lose that now when there is so little else left."

There was a pause. A white-robed Berberine boy approached noiselessly with the coffee, and vanished again. It was wonderful how easily the mechanism of daily life had run, even when the two women were left alone. Sir Charles was a judge of men. He had a capable English courier and the best of dragomans. Sonya's own English maid was devoted to her. And then there was plenty of money, and for that all things in Egypt are made smooth.

"I know more now than I did then," said Sarah Lockett. "Even then the idea did flash upon me sometimes, but I put it away and hoped it would be all right. No, you've told me nothing, you've given nothing away; but when one woman lives with another as we have done of late, every look tells and every silence speaks. I think you are a noble woman, Sonya, and I think I did you a wrong. I loved my brother, and would have done anything in the world for him."

"Believe me, dear," said Sonya, "I also would have done anything in the world for him. Even

now I think of his kindness and tenderness to me with deep affection for him. It was not my fault," she said, with a break in her voice, "that I could not go further, that I could not reward so great a love with a love as great. In these things one does not choose; one's hands are tied. Perhaps I might have done better if I had known more. In so many things I was simply a child."

"Don't, Sonya! He knew, and I knew, that no blame was yours. I want you to say that you forgive us both."

"I won't say that there's anything to forgive. If there were, it is all forgiven long ago."

"Thank you. I'm glad you've said that."

Again the silence fell over them. Away in the distance the sky grew suddenly light, with a black cloud rolling across it. Under the black cloud flames shot high into the air. The dragoman was at hand to explain. It was a sugar factory that was burning. He told them all that they wanted to know about sugar factories, and they asked many questions. On the morrow the wind, he thought, would be good. They would start very early in the morning.

When the dragoman had gone Sarah Lockett opened the piano and began to play. It was the first time that she had touched the piano since her brother's death. Sonya lay on a pile of cushions, and watched her and listened.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN ERRATIC MAN

WALTER KAYS sat in his little office at the back of the shop. In front of him plans and drawings were spread out. Halford, his engineer, stood by his shoulder and explained them. The office had been newly furnished throughout, and was almost luxurious. Walter looked healthy and happy. Prosperity agreed with him.

"Yes," he said, "but that would still have to be simplified and brought lower to make the thing a success. Unless we can get right under the cheapest car in the market, and turn out something reliable as well, it's no good thinking about it. I can't see what a light car like that wants with a reverse. Any man could push it back easily."

"Still," said Halford, "unless you get under the five hundredweight, the law insists on that reverse."

"I know. And then if some fool of a policeman thinks you have run back one foot more than was absolutely necessary, he can drop on



you. They were down on Sir Charles' driver for it the other day. He had to get to a shop a few yards back, hadn't room to turn, and didn't want to run round a block. There was no harm done whatever ; but the local idiot had to be down on him."

An assistant brought in Mr. Engelstein's card.

"Is he waiting in the shop?" Walter asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Show him in, then. I'll send word over to you, Halford, as soon as I'm free again."

Halford picked up his plans and withdrew, and Mr. Engelstein entered. He looked happy and smiling. The two men shook hands and exchanged the usual salutations.

"Well, now, Mr. Kays," said Engelstein, "I suppose you can guess why I'm here?"

Walter admitted that it was not impossible.

"Eight or nine months ago you came to me to tell me you had made a mistake, and I didn't think any the worse of you for it. I am here on much the same errand. I have made a mistake, and several others have joined with me in making it. We are now trying to think about the best way out. Perhaps you wouldn't mind glancing over that letter. It gives me my authority to conclude matters on behalf of the syndicate."

"Well, well," said Walter, as he took a cursory glance at the letter and put it down, "I'd have taken your word for that, Mr. Engelstein, you know."

"I have no doubt that is true; but it's as well to be in order. It is not impossible that you've already had a visit from one of the syndicate—a visit which, to put it mildly, was not exactly official."

Walter and Engelstein both smiled. "How did you know that?" Walter asked.

"Chiefly because I know Tapton. I wish I had known him half as well when he first came to me. I had not the least doubt that that was what he would do. I didn't employ any private detectives, but I've got tenants about here; and some of Tapton's own people know which side their bread is buttered. I only had to give a hint. Lord, bless you! I knew all about his sneaking over here next morning, and I knew what he looked like when he came out. You needn't tell me that he did no business. That's been made clear enough since. My syndicate's pretty sick of Tapton about now."

"Yes," said Walter; "all that he got was an offer to come back to his old place here. He was not too grateful for that."

"Well," said Engelstein, "we've got to make the best of it. We've got to face a loss. There was a lot of talk about fresh capital being brought in and about myself being bought out. It was supposed that Mr. Gold would be able to influence a friend of his—Lord Harpole—to come to the rescue. That has all fizzled out, as I knew it would. All that happened was that Gold got a

devilish sharp letter from Harpole, who is the patron of his living, on the subject of speculating parsons. Gold has spoiled any expectations he might have had in that direction, and he has lost a lot of his wife's money, and she has a temper—poor devil! And, as I say, we've got to make the best of it. It wouldn't surprise me greatly if Tapton pointed out to you that it would be a good thing to have these premises for the motor business exclusively, and run the ironmongery at our place over the way."

"Yes," said Walter; "he did mention that, and I think there's a good deal to be said for it."

"Undoubtedly there is. Well, I don't want my premises there to stand empty for six months or more, and the syndicate does not want to lose more than it can help on a forced sale of stock. The question's a simple one. Will you buy us out, and come in when you like?"

"To speak frankly," said Walter, "that must be quite as much a question of whether I can as whether I will. You must remember, I've had to go to a great deal of expense to fight the syndicate. I bear no ill-will about it, but the fact remains. It would be advantageous to me to have those premises, and still more advantageous to stop the competition. But one may pay too much for anything."

"I wonder how often I've told Tapton that in the last few months. Well, now, listen to me. I

believe in the way in which this business is being run ; I believe particularly in the motor side of it. Suppose you bought us out ; I am by far the biggest holder in the syndicate, and I am willing to leave my share in at five per cent., and I'll do the same with the rent of the place over the way. The other men are all trembling on their marrow bones just now, and not inclined to be extortionate. No more will be asked than a fair price for a quick sale. I need not say that I do not expect to settle it at this interview. There are valuations to be made—lots of things to be done before we can get to the actual business. All I want to know is if you are prepared to think favourably of the idea ? ”

“ Certainly I am,” said Walter. “ My brother has an interest in this business, and in the ordinary way I should consult him.”

“ Consult anybody you like.”

“ Well, he's away at present, and I shall have no opportunity. However, he left me full powers, and I may even tell you that he expected some such proposal would be made on your syndicate's behalf. You may certainly take it that I am favourable to the scheme, provided, of course, that the price asked is reasonable, and that your kind offer to let your share remain in the business still holds good.”

“ Very well,” said Engelstein, rising ; “ we have a meeting to-night, and I'll let them know what you say. Personally, I consider that I've

done a good morning's business for us, and you as well. And I'm much obliged to you. Good morning, Mr. Kays, and I hope this will be the end of any rivalries between us."

Walter did not tell his wife about this interview. He only admitted that things were going on pretty well. After dinner that night she began to talk about Lindley.

"There were two more letters came for him to-day—only circulars, I believe; and there they'll have to lie with the rest of them, for you can't forward when you've no address to forward them to. I don't think I ever knew a kinder or cleverer man, but he was certainly most queer. There he was down to breakfast just as usual, talking about the shop and the news in the morning papers, and what not. And then went straight off and packed. Gone before lunch, and not a word to us, except that he wanted a holiday, and would let us know some time. And that was a fortnight ago, and not a word have we heard yet."

"Yes," said Walter, "it was queer. When you come to think about it, the whole thing has been queer. What was I to him, or he to me? Precious little. He comes swooping down here with a pocketful of money and a head full of ideas. He works like a dog and fights—like anything, and as soon as things are put right, off he skips again at a moment's notice. Erratic chap—always was."

"You don't think——" Henrietta began, hesitatingly, and then paused.

"Think what?"

"Well, that poor aunt of yours; you know you always said——"

"I may have said a good many things that I've changed my mind about since. I thought she was mad when she left Lindley everything. I'm not so sure about it now. And as for Lindley being cracked, that's nonsense. Look here, money's the test. He's made it; he's helped us to make it. It takes brains to do that nowadays."

"Well, I said he was clever too. Only it sometimes seems to me as if a man might be both of them together."

Walter did not answer, and remained absorbed in his cigar for a few minutes.

"I'll tell you what's a funny thing," he said suddenly. "Gold, that man who was to have married my aunt, is one of the syndicate."

"You don't say that?"

"Yes, I do. It's a small world. Well, he treated her badly. I never quite knew the long and the short of it, but that was clear enough. See now what happens. It's her money, through Lindley, that punishes him, and I happen to know that he's the worst punished man in that syndicate. His friend, Lord Harpole, has thrown him over, and his hopes of any better living are done away with. It was his wife's money that he



played with, and she seems to be just the kind to give him hell. There's a justice about it."

Henrietta shook her head. "I don't see that. He broke her heart; it would be justice if his heart were broken. It isn't so much that he's lost money."

"That's your romantic ideas," said Walter. "I don't suppose that anything except the loss of money could break that chap's heart."

There was a long silence, and then Henrietta, putting down the embroidery on which she was engaged, said—

"I wonder where Lindley is to-night?"

"I wonder," echoed Walter, as he went to the table and mixed his whisky-and-soda.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SEEKING REST

**J**IMMY HAMING came out of hall. He had dined with modesty and discretion. He no longer wore the garb indicative of the deepest affliction ; his necktie was still black, but for the rest, a dark pepper-and-saltiness sufficed him. He was as careful to avoid the indications of the sportsman and the blood, as he once had been to assume them. As he left the college he put on his gown carefully and religiously, and abstained from lighting the cigarette for which he pined. He had mean rooms in a back street, and rejoiced in their cheapness, and in the dirtiness of his landlady. It was all part of the new leaf and the great sacrifice.

He went up the creaking staircase, and opened the door of his sitting-room. He was surprised to find the lamp already lit. As a rule, his landlady anticipated nothing, and brought the lamp with great regularity after he had rung twice for it. He was more surprised at the tall figure that rose from the easy-chair by the fire.



"Good Lord, Lindley! Who'd have thought of finding you here? This is good business. But why didn't you tell me you were coming? Have you dined?"

"Yes, I've dined," said Lindley. "I couldn't tell you I was coming, because, to tell the truth, I didn't know myself this afternoon. The fact is that I'm leaving England for some time, and thought that I ought to go and say good-bye to some of my pals. This morning I came up to London to find Doran."

"But you live in London, don't you?"

"Did—don't now. Doran's got my rooms. However, he was away—off on some political tour or other, so far as I could gather from Marsh. I was just thinking of going on to the club, when the brilliant idea struck me to run up to Cambridge, to see how the new virtues of James Haming were holding out."

"They're holding out rare well—not that I take any credit for it."

Lindley glanced towards a large panel photograph in a hideous plush frame on the mantelpiece.

"Is that the—er—inspiration?" he asked.

"It is," said Jimmy, proudly. "Photographs never do one any sort of justice; but what would you think of that? Candidly, I mean."

"Very pretty, and much too good for you."

"That's true enough," said Jimmy, obviously pleased.

"And," continued Lindley, "she will probably find out that she is much too good for you, and give you the chuck. And quite right too."

"That's a beastly sort of thing to say," said Jimmy, aggrieved. "I say, look here, even if you have dined, you must do something. You're not smoking. And won't you have some coffee? My landlady makes the filthiest coffee in Cambridge."

"I'll take your word for the coffee without making the experiment; but you may give me a cigarette—Virginia for choice, and you may produce your whisky."

"To tell the honest truth," said Jimmy, "I haven't got a drop of whisky in the place. I thought it over, and—well, if you don't have it, you don't drink it."

"That's excessively true," said Lindley; "so true that I'll trouble you to send out for a bottle. Remember, I have no guardian angel to guide me upwards."

Jimmy Haming laughed and rang the bell. The landlady's eldest daughter, who had accomplished the feat of being pert without being intelligent, took a written order.

"You'll stop here to-night, of course," said Jimmy. "I can always get another room here when I want it. I haven't seen it, but it can't be any worse than my own."

"It sounds tempting," said Lindley, "and it's very good of you. But I must get back by the

last train. I leave town pretty early to-morrow morning, and I shall have one or two things to see to before I go."

"Well, it's a pity," said Jimmy. "And where are you going to?"

"At present I haven't the least idea."

"Good Lord! you're a queer chap!" said Jimmy.

"It's a fact, though it must sound very much as if it were said for effect. I shall probably go to Dover and cross the Channel; but I've not quite decided on that. And what the next move will be is absolutely vague. This last month or so I have been away in the Highlands."

"Had a good time?" asked Jimmy, carefully.

"About as good a time as a man can expect when he is alone in a small Scotch hotel in a small town, and does not know anybody, and does not want to know anybody, and does not fish or play golf."

"Well, what on earth did you go up there for?"

"I'd been working pretty hard, and I supposed it would be quiet and restful. I must be built the wrong way. The things that irritate and wear me out most seem to be quiet and rest."

"What about your play? We had it down here last term, and I thought it was rather rot myself."

"There I agree with you," said Lindley.

"Still, you must made lots of money out of it."

"Oh yes—pots of money."

"You're a lucky beggar."

"Ah," said Lindley, as the landlady's daughter brought in the whisky. "Everybody thinks the other man lucky—always."

"I am lucky," said Jimmy. "I admit it. I should be a fool if I didn't."

The bell of Great Saint Mary's boomed heavily, and Jimmy, as he mixed the drinks, observed that he hated church bells, and supposed that it was because he had too much of them at home.

"I hated that, too, when I was up," said Lindley. "And now, when I come back to it, I find it rather pleasant. It sometimes seems to me one can't enjoy anything at the time—one enjoys in expectation, or in recollection, or in going back by accident to something which one had always thought rather unpleasant. I used to hate my father's shop, and for months lately I've been back in it, slaving at it, and enlarging its scope and its boundaries. It's going to be a deuced good concern, Jimmy ; and when we turn it into a limited company you'd better invest some of your uncle's money in it. As I say, I used to hate it. When I came back, it was just the tremendous change from the way of life to which I had got accustomed that I wanted."

"Why did you leave it, then?" asked Jimmy.

"Like most other things, it didn't wear very well. I seem to have fooled away most of my time in trying to get away. I'm always getting away from what I've got."

Jimmy took the chair on the other side of the fireplace, and filled his pipe.

"If I ever say anything serious to you, you always jeer at me."

"I believe I used to do a bit of that. All right—I'll reform. Sob out your sorrows—come along."

"I've not got any sorrows. Of course, I was a young ass when I was up here before ; but I don't keep on worrying about it. Things are going very well with me just now. It was your own case I was thinking about. Most men would think you pretty lucky. I can tell you I've bragged no end about knowing the successful dramatist. You admit you've made a lot of money out of that, and, according to your own account, you ought to make a lot more out of that business of your governor's. Your health's good enough—most men would envy you. Yet there you are, shamming to be cheerful, but really in a kind of morbid, unsettled sort of state. You don't seem to be able to go on with anything for long, or to stop anywhere for long. I'll tell you what would be the salvation of you. Get taken out of yourself. Instead of sneering and being superior, fall in love with some girl, like any ordinary man."

Lindley hooted with laughter, and it was not a very pleasant laugh.

"I'm awfully sorry, Jimmy," he said; "but the lovely contrast between you as you are, and you as you used to be, is a bit too much for one. However, your advice is good. I'll think it over—I promise you I will. I don't think there's anything more the matter with me than a kind of wandering instinct. I fancy there was a traveling tinker among my ancestors, and I've inherited it from him. Now, then, if you want me to be serious—really serious—tell me all about the lady of the mantelpiece."

"It's very difficult to know how to begin, or what to say. I must tell you to start with she's not at all the ordinary kind of girl."

Lindley checked himself severely. "No?" he said, sympathetically.

He listened at length to Jimmy's description of a sweet-natured young lady. Even Jimmy, who did his best, could not convey that there was anything mysterious, unplumbed, and original about her. Lindley listened almost contentedly, asked the right questions, and expressed a sufficient admiration.

After he had left Jimmy, as he walked rapidly through almost deserted streets towards the station, it struck him as queer that Jimmy's enthusiastic happiness roused no feelings of bitterness in him. There had been a certain amount of chaff at the end of their talk about

Jimmy's advice to Lindley. Lindley had asked Jimmy to make a selection for him, and forward all particulars. Lindley knew Jimmy perhaps as well as he knew and liked any man; but it was a relief to him that Jimmy in his simplicity had not grasped the real state of the case.

Next morning Lindley left Victoria for Brussels.

## CHAPTER IX

### ESCAPE

LINDLEY sat on red plush in the *train de luxe* from Calais to Brussels, and stared through the window at the flat country sliding past him without seeing it. In carefully cultured fields women, strong and gaunt, were doing the work of men, and men were doing the work of horses. Now and again a white-walled house with a red roof, aggressively neat with its green shutters, stood out among trees like a model in a toy-box. Lindley had welcomed the slightest incidents of travel. He had been amused at the start with the fury of an elderly Englishman, who wanted a liqueur that happened to be sealed up in the Belgian cellar of the train. Even a little bother with the customs officials at the frontier had been welcome, and the solemnity of their officialdom had mildly amused him. Now nothing happened but the steady labour of the engine, and the sliding panorama through the windows. He had finished, in a desperation of travellers' boredom, the work of alleged humour that he had bought for a shilling at Victoria.



He had lunch on the train, and could not, in the nature of things, lunch again; and the rattle of the train hammered out the wearisome and hackneyed Latin tag, that he who flies from his country may not escape himself. Well, it was not long now till the journey's end.

That visit to Grantown and Forres had been a mistake. The change had not been marked enough—the grandeur and gloom of the scenery had been too nearly in sympathy with him. The anodyne of work had been efficacious while it lasted; but there was no more work at Haxteth for him now. He had tried to go back to his former *métier*, and found it impracticable. One of the few things that amused him in his melancholy was the awful futility of the work that he had recently written. It was bad, of course, to be alone, and he had intended to take Doran away with him; but Doran was not available. Jimmy Haming would have been free in a day or two, but would probably have added to the trial. After all, he thought, as he rattled up in a clumsy victoria from the station to his hotel on the park, this might work. The coins that he handled were different—the colour of the telegrams was different—the rule of the road was different—the cart which he had just passed should have been pulled by a horse, and was pulled by a dog; and the dog was not in the shafts, but under the body of the vehicle. Even the intense ugliness which may be produced in

children of ten or eleven by the simple substitution of socks for stockings was something to the good ; it helped to accentuate the feeling that he had got away, and was in a world which, if only in some unessential points, was slightly different. Here, perhaps, he might find a scene for a play or a story, and a suggestion to write it.

He dined at the hotel that night. At the next table an energetic French mother and an oppressed French father supervised, almost severely, the untidy alimentation of their young. The children wanted everything that they might not have, and it would have seemed to Lindley rather pathetic if they had not been so unpleasant to look at. Towards the end of dinner they vanished towards the upper storeys in charge of a smiling nurse. The Frenchwoman said—

“Another day and we have seen nothing.”

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders, and increased the degradation of his *vin ordinaire* with a little soda-water.

“To-morrow,” he said, “will be for St. Gudule.”

Further on in the room two energetic and independent American ladies, of great vivacity, spilt their soup over a map, and discussed comparative prices stridently. An English clergyman, with a tightly buttoned wife, seemed to invite the world to attempt the insoluble problem of how he ever came to be there. Again, so far

so good. It was, at any rate, different. It was a small hotel, and the dinner, from the point of view of dinner, was not conspicuously successful. Lindley, though he remained here for months, rarely repeated the experiment.

He strolled out after dinner with the intention of losing himself, an easy feat in a town that was new to him ; and not always very difficult in towns that he knew by heart. The illuminated invitation of *Entrée libre* tempted him into a big, low-built room, heavy with the haze of smoke, and filled with long tables. At one end an orchestra of women, in white frocks and orange sashes, played waltzes far less badly than might have been expected, under the leadership of a young Jewess with a permanent smile, who had just missed being pretty. An eager waiter, in carpet slippers, shuffled up with Lindley's *bock*, and charged him the price for it that is usual in the temples of the *Entrée libre*. It was rather sordid and amusing. Two little girls, of twelve and fourteen, with their father and mother, sat opposite to Lindley, and astonished him with their intense anæmia, their Flemish stolidity, and the impropriety of their being there at all. A lady of the establishment came up to Lindley, wished him "Good evening," in English, and, subsiding into French again, told him that her name was Carmencita, which did not seem at all probable, and that she was very thirsty. Lindley financed her bottle of stout, and in some subtle

way gave her to understand that he did not require her to sit on his knee. So she brought up her cousin Véronique, who was also thirsty. Lindley laughed, and paid, and went out. It had been something to do, at any rate; but the atmosphere was a little too terrific. All the while the two anæmic children had sat and glared at him, and conversed with one another in shy whispers.

He wandered out again, followed the streets that led upwards, and got back to the park again. Chance brought him to the door of his hotel. In the smoking-room the oppressed French father smoked a pale cigar, and sipped, at intervals, a sticky liqueur. He observed that the weather seemed likely to improve, and Lindley admitted it. Then he went up to bed. After all, this was not so bad. It would, at any rate, do for a while, and for a while help to obscure in his mind the vision of Sonya in her little fur jacket, standing by the fire in his London flat; and so help him to keep his promise to her.

The next day he secured for himself a little private sitting-room on the same floor as his bedroom, and made attempts to write again. He had seen much which was suggestive, if only it would take shape in his mind and he could see definitely what was suggested. Those two weird and very white-faced girl children were vivid before his eyes, and his imagination started

away on their future history. Then it was the Jewess in the orange sash, her fiddle tucked under her fat chin, and he flew off on the track of her past. But there was nothing substantial, nothing cohesive, nothing that he could go upon. All that was wanted was concentration, and he had sometimes found that prolonged work would induce this. To-morrow, undoubtedly, he would stick to it. To-day he lunched at a restaurant in the Rue d'Anspach, and then drove off to drink in, with other tourists, the horrors of the Musée Wiertz.

After that one day was much like another; always there was some attempt to work with greater or less success. Many things were begun, and nothing was finished. There were fits of a furious determination that, after all, his life should not be ruined, and that he would yet do something. More often there were fits of lethargy, when he was content to sit out on the pavement in front of the restaurant where he had lunched or dined, and sip his mazagran and watch the moment as it passed. A ragged boy begged for his superfluous and ridiculous rectangular piece of sugar. A fat priest rolled by and suggested what a very queer angel he would make. A woman called out the names of newspapers with baffling unintelligibility. As long as something happened which he could see and think about, it sufficed. Anything sufficed so long as he did not think of Sonya and the life

which she must now be leading. But of that he rarely thought, and dared not think. Then perhaps some scene would come into his mind which he wanted to put down on paper—a detached fragment, nothing in itself, but with possibilities about it, and he would go back to work. He received no letters, and he wrote none. He wanted nothing to remind him of what had been.

And then one day, as he listened to the music in the cathedral, he saw that this was all wrong. At the moment when the blow had fallen he had found an escape in working for another. That way of escape was still open. There must be something in England that a man could do who had money, was not very particular, and wanted only to work for others. He must mix himself up with the herd again; he must talk to Walter about improved carburetters, and to Henrietta about new tea-gowns, and to Anna's husband about the political situation, and to Anna herself about anything. As likely as not these good people were all beginning to be very anxious about him. He had taken a selfish line, and selfishness had been its own punishment. Sooner or later he felt that this exiled life would end in madness. And when he no longer knew what he did, or no longer controlled his actions, he might break his word to Sonya, and Sonya might get to know it. He left Brussels at nine that night. He waited for a few hours' rest in

London, and then took the express north to Haxteth. He even remembered to send a premonitory telegram that he was coming and that he was quite well. But he did not look well ; he looked hunted and broken.

CHAPTER X  
THE AWAKENING

LINDLEY had been so long alone, with no greetings but the calculated servility of waiters and porters, that his welcome at Haxteth impressed him. He found himself quite glad to see Henrietta again, and quite surprised that he should be glad. They had little in common. Her babble at the best should have bored him, and at the worst might have maddened him. But then he had during his stay at Haxteth helped her quite a good deal, and one gets to like the people to whom one has shown kindness. Besides, goodwill calls goodwill, and Henrietta's goodwill towards Lindley was evidenced by all the means in her power. There were flowers in his bedroom. Lindley regarded flowers in his bedroom much as he would have regarded tooth-powder in his soup; but he knew that with many women flowers in the bedroom are accepted as the last word of delicate attention. It was only a hint from Walter that saved him from overlooking the fact that the unpretentious little dinner had been arranged to suit supposed



preferences of his. Some time or other he must have said that he liked this dish or that. The desire to please, coupled with a momentary incapacity for thinking of anything better, would account for it. But he remembered to say that he was "being spoiled. Really, Henrietta was quite good-natured; handsome enough, too, in her lazy over-blown way. Lindley thought for the first time that his brother was in some ways to be envied. At least he had what he wanted; if he was satisfied with a faithful animal, the happier he. There is little happiness for those who want the blue roses.

"But I do call it a shame," said Henrietta. "All these months, and we've never had so much as a post-card from you. Why, you might have been dead."

"In that case," laughed Lindley, "I should have written. The fact is, that I've always thought that on a holiday one should never send letters and never receive them. It makes the change all the greater, and gives you more to talk about when you come back."

"Well, we don't know where you've been yet or what you've done; but I can't say that you look any the better for it. Now does he, Walter?"

"Well," said Lindley, "for the last month or so I've been restaurant-fed. I suppose they cook very well on the Continent, as one is always told so; but the trouble at Brussels seemed to be that

they had so little worth cooking. A few days of this kind of thing will put me all right again."

"I've always heard," said Walter, "that abroad they have no beef—not what we should call beef."

"Have you got through that pile of letters yet, Lindley?" Henrietta asked.

"Rather not. The first lump of them I picked up were all circulars, and went straight into the waste-paper basket. That discouraged me. I dare say I shall finish them to-morrow some time."

"But some of them are real letters. There was one, I noticed, with the *English Review* on the envelope. I thought it might be something to do with your writing, and that I ought to send it on. But then, of course, I couldn't."

"I expect it's from a man I know at the office. I've done no work for them for a long time. Anyhow, it has waited so long that another day or two won't hurt it."

He began to talk of his holiday in Morayshire and afterwards at Brussels. He was clever in picking out the things that would interest Henrietta.

She was fascinated. "I should love to go," she said. "I suppose we shall be able to afford a holiday now."

Walter admitted the possibility. "Not that I should care to go off all alone like that."

"No," said Lindley, "that's a mistake of mine,

I think. The only thing to be said for it is that it makes one glad to get back again."

Henrietta looked pleased. "And you'll stop here a long time now, I hope."

"Only a few days, I'm afraid. This last year I've been interfering in other people's business. It's about time I got back to my own. But you must come and see me in London."

"Walter's always going up to London now on his business. He took me with him once. I got this tea-gown there."

"Did you? Well, it's very pretty. And what has been happening in Haxteth?"

"You heard about Sir Charles, up at the Hall?" said Walter.

"Sir Charles Amadel? No, I've heard nothing. What's he been doing?"

"Nothing. Well, that's not quite the way to put it. He's dead. Died soon after you left—a stroke. That was on Monday, and he was never conscious again. Died on the Wednesday. It made a great sensation here. Muffled peals, shutters up everywhere. Yes, he was a good man and much respected. Queer, of course—would always think less about spending a thousand than he would about saving twopence. Everybody noticed it. Well, we can't take it with us when we die." He replenished his glass with the port that his wise father had laid down.

"Seems a gloomy subject," said Henrietta, disapprovingly.

There had been something horribly and unspeakably ridiculous in Walter's attempt at a suitable solemnity.

Lindley's mind was busy. He wanted to know something.

"A big funeral, I suppose?"

"Very middling."

Walter had hoped for something more spectacular.

Lindley pursued his subject. "The family all there, I suppose?"

"The three sons were. That's about all the relations he had, I think. His sister, Mrs. Fielding, died, you know. Irreligious woman—Sir Charles could never get on with her."

"He did set an example in church attendance," said Henrietta. "Weather made no difference to him."

"But she had children, hadn't she?" said Lindley.

"One—a girl. She's grown-up and married now. Married pretty well, I believe—a baronet. Bagland, or some such name. No, she wasn't there. I fancy there wasn't much love lost between them."

"Still," said Henrietta, "one would have thought that, at a time like that, anything of that kind would have been put aside."

"One would have thought so," Lindley echoed, mechanically.

"Now, I'll tell you what I should have done

in her place," Henrietta continued. "Even if I hadn't felt like attending, I should have sent flowers—just a simple wreath—you see what I mean."

Lindley was puzzled. He knew that Sonya bore no illwill towards her uncle—none, at least, that would survive his death. If she had been in England she would certainly have been present, and she had been due back in England in the spring. Could she be ill? More than one horrible possibility urged itself into his mind. After all, it might be simply a change of plan. She had decided to remain abroad longer than she had at first intended. It was perfectly likely. Then that letter from the *English Review* flashed across his mind. It might be from Doran, and, if so, there might be news of Sonya in it.

A minute later he confessed his impatience to get at that pile of letters which he had said might as well wait a day or two longer. Walter and Henrietta were used to Lindley's little inconsistencies. He went upstairs to his own sitting-room, promising to come down again as soon as the letters were finished.

"He doesn't look well, you know," said Walter. "Seems almost as if he were worried about something, though I'm sure I don't know what he can have to worry him."

"There is something on his mind, I know," said Henrietta. "Look at all those changes we've

made in the dining-room. I don't think he even noticed them. And his eyes used to be sharp enough."

"Ah, so did his tongue sometimes."

"Never to me. And if he did wake you up a bit, I'm sure you've no cause to grumble. Think how we were a year ago—why, it's less than a year ago."

"Bless you, I don't grumble. I'm very well satisfied with the way things are going. But you needn't talk as if he had done everything. His ideas were good, and his money was better; but the luck was the best of all. We hit at the right moment, and the opposition went over. But if it hadn't been the right moment we might have been hammering away still. And then my own work counts for something, and I do keep on at it. You don't find me bolting off on mysterious holidays, and leaving no address for months at a time."

"I say," said Henrietta, "do you think there's a woman in it?"

"May be. You know how close he is. I certainly shouldn't care to ask him; and if I did, he wouldn't tell."

"It would fit in with that sort of absent-mindedness. I can't think how he could even have gone into the dining-room without seeing the improvements. I wasn't going to say anything about them if he didn't."

Walter glanced at his watch. "I wish he'd

look sharp with those letters of his, and come down again."

"I know what you want," said Henrietta. "You want to talk business with him. It's always business nowadays. I do think you might leave it when you come in to dinner."

"Well, business is getting rather interesting just now. There's our new car, you know."

"If you make that, will you make it here?"

Walter laughed. "Yes, my dear. We'll make them in the spare bedroom with a screw-driver and a bit of string. No, Henrietta; we shan't make them here, of course. There's no room and none of the appliances, or next to none. That's a much bigger game. But I'll tell you what—we shan't make them at all unless we turn this business into a limited company. That was Lindley's idea, and old Engelstein, who knows more about such things than Lindley and myself put together, seems keen on it. Mind, it wouldn't be yet. Not, in all probability, for two or three years. But if it does come, I can tell you one thing—we shall have to clear out of this place. Every inch of it would be wanted for the business, and we couldn't go on living here."

"And where should we go?"

"Not far. Somewhere in the country outside Haxteth. I should go into business on my car every morning. I'd get a place with a good big garden, and I dare say it would be a lot healthier for both of us. How would you like it?"

"Like it? I should love it. I was country-bred, you know. I'm not one to complain, and I've never said anything against this house. But a good garden—that would be a treat."

Upstairs in the room that had been Aunt Emmeline's, Lindley sat and stared at Doran's letter. He had read it through several times. It was written on his club paper, and had arrived at the time when Lindley was away in the Highlands.

"I am not going to give you any advice," Doran said. "I'm going to tell you what has happened in case you do not see it elsewhere. Sir Charles Mariland died at Wady Halfa yesterday. Mrs. Lockett is with Lady Mariland at present. Do what you think best."

A later part of the letter referred to Doran's candidature for the south-west division of Breakshire.

"If you are free," he said, "I hope you will be able to spare a week or two to help me. You are a good speaker, and by this time your political education has gone much further than when we first met in town. It is something of a forlorn hope, and I want all the help I can get, and should be really grateful to you. At the same time, if your refusal comes to me from Egypt, I shall quite understand. Sefton was inquiring for you the other day. He says that he has not seen a line of the new play you promised to send him."



Lindley cursed himself. He saw now all that he had done by his flight into a selfish and melancholy solitude, and by deliberately shutting himself out from the world in which he had once mixed. He had failed Sonya ; he had failed Doran, who had been his best friend ; he had not even gained anything for himself. He might not have gone to Egypt, but he would assuredly have written—he would have offered his services. He would not have been the heartless brute that Sonya must now think him.

The idea suddenly flashed across him. He turned again to the pile of letters. There might be one from Sonya. He stopped at an envelope addressed in Mrs. Lockett's sprawling handwriting, and bearing the Rome postmark. As he tore it open, two letters fluttered to the ground. One was in the same handwriting as the address on the envelope ; the other was in pencil from Sonya. It was to this that he turned first.

“ DEAREST LINDLEY (it began),

“ I thought you must have heard of my husband's death—quite recently, of pneumonia, at Wady Halfa. But you have never written, and so now I think you cannot have known. I cannot yet talk about it much. I have been very ill here in Rome. They say that I am still ill, and I write this in bed. But I am getting better, and Sarah has been nursing me devotedly.

I want to get better. I don't want to give up, however much I may have failed, and however often. I so much long to see you. Sarah won't let me do any more writing. Good-bye, dearest."

The letter from Mrs. Lockett was brief—

"DEAR MR. KAYS,

"It will shorten matters to say that I have been nursing Sonya, and that for many nights she was delirious. I know everything. I know bitterly how great a wrong my love for my dead brother forced me to do her. For God's sake, come to her!"

Lindley folded both letters, put them in his pocket, and went downstairs.

"At last!" said Walter, genially. "Now then, if you'll take a cigar, and mix yourself a whisky-and-soda, we can go over what I've done in the matter of business. Engelstein is inclined to fall in with your suggestion——"

"Wait a minute," said Lindley. "I am awfully sorry, but I'm called up to London at once. It's important. Is there an up-train to-night?"

Walter glanced at his watch. "The last goes in ten minutes, and you might catch it if you ran at once. But you'd have no time to pack anything. It seems to me it would be more sensible

to wait and have your breakfast comfortably to-morrow morning, and then——”

“Oh, good-bye,” said Lindley. “Good-bye, both of you. I’m awfully sorry, and I’ll come back again. But I must catch this train to-night.”

## CHAPTER XI

### PLAIN SPEAKING

"YES," said Doran, "Lady Mariland is better—quite well, in fact, according to her own account. They are expected back at Sarah Lockett's flat some time this week; I don't know the day. Is there anything else you want to know?"

"Thanks very much," said Lindley. "That is some relief to my mind. I shall go on to South Kensington directly. By the way, I wanted to congratulate you on your election."

"Did you?" said Doran. "Thanks."

"I can see you are pretty sick with me," said Lindley. "But really it's not my fault. I don't suppose my assistance would have been of the least use to you, but you should certainly have had it if I had had your letter."

"Yes," said Doran, "I am pretty sick with you. Not about my election especially, but yourself generally—your weakness, your selfishness, and the stupid mess you've made of things generally."

"Go on," said Lindley. "You won't say

anything worse of me than I have thought of myself."

"I wonder if it would do you the least earthly good if I did go on? You have had all the chances, and what have you done with them? You started in life with no prospects worth mentioning, and a lucky chance sent you to be educated at a public school and Cambridge. I don't know what you did at the school, but you didn't distinguish yourself at Cambridge. You met me in town and worked more or less seriously for the *English Review*, and that you have given up. You wrote a play which was very good and quite unusually lucky, but you've not gone on with that. You go back home and run your brother's business for him, and there, again, you cannot go on with it. Filled with the idea that you are something of a genius, and have got to be queer and romantic, you shut yourself out of the world for months, and won't even have your letters forwarded to you. What is the consequence? An old friend, if I may so call myself, for the first time (and it will be the last too) asks you to do him a service. You do not even reply. The woman whom you pretend to love is lying on the verge of death away in Italy, and sends for you. You do not answer, and you do not go. But you do expect that two minutes of your explanations and congratulations are going to put the world all right with you again."

"No, I don't," said Lindley. "The rest is all

true. But there is one thing permanent with me. It was that which drove me from London to Haxteth, and from Haxteth to those stupid months of solitude. I can't talk about it to you or explain it. If I have wronged others, don't think that I haven't suffered myself. And I don't suppose I am at the end of it."

"You look as if you'd been through a good deal," said Doran, grimly. "Oh, you fool! why didn't you do what I told you? Yes, I know it was a jump in the dark, but you might have depended on Graves and myself. Think what you might have saved her. Why, that swine—yes, I know I'm speaking of a dead man, but I don't care—began drinking again within a month of his marriage. She could never have saved him. Thank God for the varying temperatures of Wady Halfa, and the consequent pneumonia!"

"No," said Lindley, "I suppose she could never have saved him. The whole thing is too horrible to think about. But if she had let him go, what would he have done then? And after that, how would it have been with her?"

"I can see that," said Doran. "It was one of those cursed complications of life, out of which there is no easy way."

"The easiest would have been the hardest for her. Well, as for the rest of the charges, it was more a mistake of judgment than anything else that kept me from receiving my letters. As for the work, I can show you books full of it, and

none of it of the least use. How can a man work when he is as I am—when he is fighting against a stone wall, and there is one thing only in his mind? If I had been three times as vain and selfish and idle as you suppose, by God! I've been through enough hell to pay for it all!"

"Well, I wasn't in the sweetest of tempers with you," said Doran. "I had to say what I thought. Now let's make the best of a bad business. Life, by the way, seems to consist principally in doing that. We've got the telephone downstairs; I'll try to get Sarah Lockett or one of her servants, and then you'll know what your next step had better be."

Lindley waited impatiently for Doran's return. The jolt and rattle of the train seemed to be still going on in his brain. He had not slept, and did not even feel drowsy. He had the curious sensation that he must go right on, and that the end was near, one way or the other.

"Well?" he said sharply, as Doran came back again.

"It's like a child's game of hide-and-seek," said Doran. "Sarah Lockett and Lady Mariland left for Haxteth this morning."

"They will have gone to the Hall, of course?"

"They don't know at the flat. The address was to be sent on to them after their arrival. You had better wait for it."

"Wait until mid-day to-morrow? No, I

couldn't do that. I must go on now. They must have gone to the Hall."

"I don't think so," said Doran. "In that case they would certainly have left their address."

"It doesn't matter. Wherever they are I shall find them. Am I interrupting your work? Have you got any time to talk for a bit?"

"Yes," said Doran.

"Now, I want you to tell me the whole thing—tell me all you know. About Mariland, I mean, about his breakdown and death, and about her illness in Rome. And you needn't spare me anything."

Doran told the story as he knew it. Much of it was grim and horrible enough.

Lindley heard it through to the end without a word of interruption. Then he rose to go.

"You had much better stop here," said Doran. "You are really not fit to be about by yourself."

"Thanks very much," said Lindley, mechanically. "I think I would rather go. I want to think over what you've been saying, and I shall be best alone. I'm all right, really. I'll write to you from Haxteth."



CHAPTER XII  
ON THE DYKE

THE early morning had been deep in mist. And now the air was still and hot, and the sun blazed mercilessly on the white dust of the road. Lindley turned away from the lodge gates. Sonya was not there—in fact, none of the family was at the Hall at present.

He had gone straight from the railway station up to the lodge. It would have been intolerable for him at that time to see Henrietta and Walter. He could imagine their questions. For a moment or two he stood irresolute in the road. This was only one more farcical trick that was being played with his tragedy. At one or other of the hotels in Haxteth he would be sure to find them. He was covered with the grime of the train and the dust of his long walk. Suddenly he remembered that he was now quite near to the dyke. He would go and bathe in the brook again.

The dyke was quite deserted and wonderfully still. After a long swim Lindley felt better ; but his head was still burning. He had but to shut his eyes to see as distinctly as possible Sonya

in Egypt, or Sonya again in Rome, lying at the point of death, and writing to bid him to come to her. The pictures were startlingly real, as though he might have stretched out his hand and touched her. Sometimes they even persisted for a little while after his eyes were open again. He was consumed with rage against himself. He tried to think steadily and clearly. This would not do at all. For the last two nights he had not slept, and he was not in a fit state to talk to people. The phrases came all wrong. He remembered that the old lodge-keeper had looked curiously at him. Then suddenly an overmastering desire for sleep came upon him. He was done; he could have dropped where he stood. In a shady spot away from the foot-track he stretched himself, with his head on one arm, and immediately blessed unconsciousness came over him. In his dream he was a boy again, chasing butterflies. They were marvellous butterflies, of the most vivid colours; but they all flew far too high for him, and people came up and told him that it was really not worth while to have bought that cyanide bottle.

For many hours he slept, and his sleep became deep and dreamless. It was within an hour of sunset when he awoke.

"No," he said to himself, as he looked at the white figure seated on the grass beside him; "this is not true. It is only the dream going on." He rubbed his eyes. "Sonya," he said aloud.

She slipped her hand in his, and bent her head.

"I was looking for you," Lindley said dreamily. "I have been in London, and then I came back here. Suddenly I could not keep awake any longer. I hardly seem to be awake now. It would not startle me if I found that you were not there, and that it was not your hand that I held."

"Yes, I am Sonya. Tell me, have you been ill? You look ill. What is the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter, if I have found you at last, and if you can ever forgive me."

"But I knew," said Sonya. "I knew you had never had my letter. Ah! those awful nights." Her lips trembled, and then she went on firmly and almost excitedly, "No, no—the past is past. We must talk over it no more. I have made up my mind to that. And why should we talk of forgiveness? What have I made of your life?"

"Listen!" said Lindley. "Yesterday—I think it was yesterday—I was in London, and talking to Doran. I had gone there to find you, Sonya, and Doran told me all the truth about myself. Once or twice he seemed to recall to me my own father lecturing me. 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.' He showed me how much chance has done for me, and how little I have done for myself. And how selfish, how cruelly and horribly selfish, I have been through all this."

"But he does not know you really," said Sonya. "Only I know you really."

"Sonya, I love you. That is all the good there is in me."

They rose and walked together to the old, disused railway cutting. As they went Sonya told him how she had come to Haxteth to see the grave of Sir Charles Amadel, as a sign that she had no quarrel with him. For years past she had seen little of her cousins, and was not likely to meet them again. Sarah and she were stopping at a little inn they had found, not far from the dyke. They were going back to London next day. Suddenly she turned from her explanations and looked up at him.

"Tell me," she said, "am I changed?"

She had changed. Much of the childishness had gone from her face; sorrow had given it a new dignity. Yet now she looked supremely happy.

"I do not know whether you have changed," said Lindley. "You are very beautiful." He pointed to the railway cutting deep in the chalk before them, with its broken bridge and useless sleepers and twisted metal. "That," he said, "is typical of me without you. Great intentions that have led to nothing."

"No, no," said Sonya; "not to nothing. You have done more than you know. Why," she said, "you have even helped me more than you know. You must not blame yourself any longer

I understand you so well. Apologies, explanations—no, they are not for us.”

There was a long pause. They stood facing one another, Lindley holding both her hands in his.

“Had you been there long,” he said, “when I woke up?”

“No, it cannot have been very long. I, too, could hardly believe it at first. Though, through all, I have known that we should meet again.”

“And,” said Lindley, almost savagely, “this time I shall not let you go. I shall never let you go again.” He drew her closer to him.

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